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HISTORY OF THE BIBLE.

INTRODUCTION.

THE important Volume of the narrative of which it is purposed to give here a continuous outline, holds a place in the literature of this and of other Christian countries, totally distinct from that occupied by any other work, either of History or of Science. Besides a connected and faithful, though succinct account of the earliest ages of the world; of the reduction of chaos into order; of the creation of man and other animals; and of the consequences, moral as well as physical, which ensued; the Bible professes to give a detail of numerous occurrences, in which the Creator, not less than the creature, was an immediate actor, and of which the object is represented to have been uniformly the same, viz., the benefit of the human race. In few words, the Bible advances claims upon the notice of persons in all ranks of society, not merely as explaining the course of events of which, but for it, they could have known nothing; but as containing the substance of various dispensations, granted from

time to time by God to man, for the purpose of instructing him in his duty as a moral and religious being, and, as a necessary consequence, of increasing his happiness.

That a volume which makes such demands upon the consideration of mankind at large should have attracted the closest scrutiny, wherever it has been known, cannot by any means surprise us. The claim to a Divine original by any human performance is what enlightened men are always slow to admit, unless, indeed, the evidence on which it rests be of a nature not to be called in question; and hence the Bible, more than any other literary performance, with which we are acquainted, has been the subject of minute examination and keen controversy. In every age daring spirits have arisen, to question the justice of its title to the character which it assumes, while hosts of champions have at no period been wanting to meet the objections of the infidel, under whatever guise brought forward. It cannot be expected that, in a work like the present, we should enter much at large into the matter of these disputes; but it appears essential to the plan of every History of the Bible, that some, at least, of the many reasons extant should be given why the sacred records are to be received as authentic.

No person who believes that God exists, and that He is a being of infinite power, wisdom, and knowledge, can reasonably deny that He may, if he think proper, make a direct and extraordinary revelation of himself and of his will to men, instead of leaving them, in matters so important, to the less certain guidance of their own rational faculties. God's power being almighty, it must extend to whatever does not imply a self-contradiction; and as there is no self-contradiction here to the possibility of such a revelation, no rational objection can be offered. In like manner, it appears the height of absurdity to affirm, that God, when

communicating this revelation, does not possess the means of convincing those to whom it is granted, that they have been subject to no delusion; such advantages men every where enjoy when conversing, or otherwise negotiating the one with the other—it were strange to deny to the great Author of the universe, a degree of power, which is continually exercised by his creatures.

Again, there are a variety of circumstances connected with the annals of our race, in themselves neither unimportant nor easily overlooked, which lead to the conclusion not only that some such revelation is possible, but that its actual occurrence is in the highest degree probable.

If any credit be due to the general sense of mankind, we shall scarcely find an individual in any age who, believing in the existence of a God or gods, did not also believe that some direct commerce subsisted between God and man. Hence it is that all popular religions, the most abominable as well as the most pure, have been said by their votaries to have been derived from the Gods; and hence, also, the care with which the most eminent legislators of antiquity sought to impress the minds of the people with a persuasion that they held, with their deities, an intimate communication. Zoroaster, Minos, Pythagoras, Lycurgus, Numa, &c. &c., all thought it necessary to lay claim to immediate inspiration, and their claims were not disputed, because the persons to whom they addressed themselves, felt that they stood in need of supernatural illumination, and fondly believed that their Gods were willing to grant it. But it is not from a bare contemplation of the conduct of the illiterate among mankind, that we arrive at the conclusion which has just been drawn. It seems perfectly inconsistent with the tenour of God's dealings with the inferior animals, that he should place them at once in the highest state to which they are capable of attaining, yet leave man without

the means of acquiring that knowledge in which his chief happiness centres; for that man is incapable by any exertion of his reasoning faculties, to discover such a religious system as shall satisfy his wants, or reconcile him to his destiny, we have the testimony of all experience for asserting. Let any man turn to the writings of the wisest and best of the heathen philosophers; and he will find there proofs innumerable that the statement which we have hazarded has not been rashly advanced, whilst a consideration of those gross and debasing fictions with which the vulgar were deluded and deceived, will not, we presume, have a tendency to shake our argument.

The possibility, and even the probability of an event does not, however, furnish grounds for arbitrarily assuming that the event in question has actually occurred. To authorize such an assumption, it must be further shown, that the event is in itself necessary for the attainment of some end, concerning which no doubts are entertained; and hence it becomes incumbent upon us to prove, that the great design of God in creating man, could not be fully accomplished without an immediate revelation of himself and of his will to his creatures.

Those who maintain that a revelation is not necessary to man, yet allow that man cannot attain to his highest state of perfection without a knowledge of God and of religion, rest their argument upon one or other of two grounds. They assert either that man is naturally endowed with an innate sense of Deity, which leads him to worship and obey his Maker; or that human reason is of itself, and unassisted by a higher power, capable of discovering the great and fundamental truths of all religion.

We, on the other hand, absolutely deny both propositions; and it remains that we demonstrate their fallacy.

To overthrow the notion of an innate sense of

religion, it is sufficient to observe, that instincts where they exist, are never erroneous, nor lead such as obey them into absurdities. Instinct directs all animals to eat when they are hungry, and to drink when they are thirsty*—never to drink when they are hungry, or eat when they are thirsty; indeed, instinct, as far as it goes, is undeniably the most certain guide to which creatures endowed with vitality and sensation are subject. It is a well established fact, moreover, that the more rude and uncultivated the condition of man is, the more just and accurate are all his instincts, which are never thwarted nor overborne, except in a highly civilized and unnatural state of society.

Let us see now in what manner this innate sense of religion has operated among mankind. Have the most correct notions of God and religion been uniformly entertained by savages, and has civilization tended to corrupt and debase them? The very reverse is the fact. The more barbarous men appear, the more unworthy are all their ideas of the Great First Cause; nay, there are whole tribes in whose language no term is to be found expressive of the Creator and Governor of the Universe.

All this, as we need not point out, is directly at variance with the one and immutable law by which instincts are governed; and hence the theory that man is instinctively a religious being, falls to the ground.

As little reason is there for supposing that man, if left to himself, from the first hour of his creation, could have arrived at any satisfactory knowledge of the existence, power, and moral attributes of God. Let the condition of man, as he came from the hands of his Maker, be duly considered. Is it conceivable, that a solitary pair of creatures, or several pairs of

* There is this difference between appetite and instinct, that whereas appetite advises animals of their wants, instinct, and instinct alone, directs them how to satisfy those wants,

creatures, called suddenly into existence, without a single notion or idea engraved on their minds, would ever think, however fruitful their world might be, of instituting one inquiry as to its origin; or, if they did institute such inquiry, would they be capable, short and simple as the process appears, to conduct it to an issue? No man who has paid due attention to the means by which all our ideas of external objects are introduced into our minds, through the medium of the senses, or to the still more refined process by which, reflecting on what passes in our minds themselves, when we combine or analyze these ideas, we acquire all our knowledge of intellectual objects, will pretend that they would.

The efforts of intellect necessary to discover an unknown truth are so much greater than those which may be sufficient to comprehend that truth, and feel the force of the evidence on which it rests, when fairly stated, that for one man whose intellectual powers are adequate to the former operation, ten thousand are equal to the latter. Those, therefore, who attribute our knowledge of religion to the efforts of human reason, are driven to the conclusion, that at first, and during many succeeding generations, mankind were ignorant of that science; but that, in proportion as they emerged from a state of absolute and deplorable barbarity, so they attained to a belief in the existence of God or gods, and became religious. In other words, it is held that there is in human nature an innate tendency to perfection, which has slowly, but surely, advanced the race from a savage to a refined state, and that this tendency has operated not more powerfully with reference to their outward habits, than in regulating their mental or inward speculations.

We have already shown, that to treat man thus; to leave him, even for several generations, without a competent guide to direct him in a matter so important as religion, is diametrically opposed to the

whole process of God's dealings with his other animated creatures.

They, as well the fowls of the air, as the beasts of the field, have from the beginning been supplied with faculties which conduct them steadily, and without any instruction, to the utmost perfection of which their several natures seem to be capable; and they accordingly continue, as species, the same at this moment as they were when preserved with Noah in the ark, thousands of years ago. How different has been the state of man during the same extended period! Many nations which, soon after the Deluge, were highly civilized and enlightened, have been sunk for ages in barbarism and ignorance; whilst others, and especially the people of Europe, after a long night of intellectual darkness, are among the most enlightened nations that ever existed.

Whence have these changes arisen, or how is it conceivable that such changes could have arisen, at all, upon the principle that human nature is endowed with an innate tendency which leads continually towards perfection? The whole theory is founded in error; and the opinion, which depends upon it for support, that revelation is not necessary, because reason is competent to the purpose of instructing man in his religious duties, must be resigned. Besides, we have the testimony of persons in our favour, not inferior in sagacity, in penetration, or in vigour of mind to any modern whatever, when we assert that, to discover many, and these the most important truths in religion, human reason is totally incompetent. Socrates, Plato, and Cicero, have each confessed that there was need for some Divine teacher to appease their longings after truth; and what Socrates, Plato, and Cicero avowed, he must be a bold speculator who presumes to contradict.

The conclusion, therefore, to which our reasoning leads is this—that a knowledge of Himself, and of

His will, was originally conveyed by revelation from God to the parents of the human race, and that all the superstitions that have ever prevailed in the world must be traced back to that revelation as to their source.

But if it was nowise unworthy of the majesty and goodness of God to supply the first generations of men with a perfect knowledge of his will, still less derogatory to these attributes is the notion, that God, in compassion to the infirmities of his fallen creatures, should condescend once more to renew his revelation after they, in the grossness of their hearts, had corrupted it. The question accordingly arises—how, supposing this to be the case, is it conceivable that God would proceed? Would he do for the second time towards mankind at large what he did towards the first pair, that is, directly and immediately reveal himself to each individual, leaving the individuals thus instructed to convey, by tradition, his laws to their descendants? A moment's reflection may suffice to show that such a course could have been productive of no benefit. They who had corrupted one tradition, would soon corrupt another, and hence, such revelations must be repeated to every successive generation, or they would be followed by no beneficial results. But to expect that God would thus reveal himself, year by year, as it were, to mankind, is to entertain notions of the Deity quite at variance with those which reason dictates; whilst it is very obvious that the revelations, if granted, would soon cease to be regarded as supernatural, by degenerating into regular and periodical occurrences. The only imaginable method, therefore, for the Deity to adopt was to select one tribe out of the multitude; to reveal himself particularly to the heads or leaders of that tribe, as well as generally to the whole of its members, and to cause so many of the circumstances attending these revelations, as appeared necessary for his own wise purposes, to be

recorded in a book, for the instruction of all future generations. The tribe thus selected would, during the ages of the world's darkness, serve as a repository for the truth, from which, as from a centre, knowledge would be gradually diffused, till, all things being prepared for the change, their particular election would cease, and the whole human race be admitted to a participation in the blessings of revelation.

It is the belief of the Christian, that such, in every particular, was the conduct of the Almighty.

He contends that God did, in the universal spread of corruption, reveal himself, first, to the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and afterwards to their descendants; that he constituted of the latter a commonwealth expressly selected to preserve alive a knowledge of true religion; and that he caused the several revelations in question, with the most important circumstances attending them, to be recorded in a book, which has been preserved, uncorrupted and entire, down to the present times. That book is the Bible; and that it is what it professes to be, the Word of God, it remains for us, within as narrow a space as it is at all consistent with the subject, to demonstrate.

In conducting this argument, the chief difficulty lies, not in finding proofs—for these are numerous and overwhelming—but in selecting such as shall serve our purpose, without compelling us to exceed the limits within which we are necessarily confined. Of these, one of the most obvious lies in the character of the Jews, from whom we confessedly derive the Old Testament, which affords strong presumptive evidence that they have neither forged nor corrupted that volume, to which they, as well as we, appeal as the foundation of their creed. If a person were brought before a court of justice under an indictment for forgery, without any positive or presumptive evidence being produced against him, he would, as a matter of

course, be immediately acquitted :—again, if a person were thus accused, the forgery alleged being totally inconsistent with his general character and habits; if it tended to expose to disgrace and reproach his general principles and conduct, or if we were assured, upon undeniable testimony, that he considered the particular kind of forgery as an impious and abominable crime, it would require very circumstantial and explicit evidence to convince us of his guilt. The case of the Jews, as connected with the authenticity or corruption of the Old Testament, is one precisely in point.

If a Jew had forged any book in that volume, he must have been impelled to so bold and dangerous an enterprise by some very powerful and influential motive. It could not be national pride—for there is scarcely one of these books that does not severely censure the national manners; it could not be the love of fame—for that passion would have taught him to flatter and extol the national character, and the punishment, if detected, would have been ignominy and death; it could not be the love of wealth—for no wealth was to be gained by such an undertaking.

Again : from all that we know of the career of the Jews, there are two distinct periods in their history, during which they may be said to have possessed an absolute contrariety of national character. The first of these extends from the Exode out of Egypt, down to the Babylonish captivity, throughout which their tendency undeniably was to idolatry: the second commences with their return to their own country, and ends with the coming of the Messiah: when idolatry was, from first to last, the object of their abhorrence. Let us see how far it is possible to believe that the books of the Old Testament could have been forged either in the former, or in the latter of these eras.

Had any books of the Old Testament been forged

before the Babylonish captivity, is it conceivable that the impostor would have inveighed so strongly against idolatry, and imputed to it the calamities of the state, knowing, as he must have known, that by such conduct he would render himself obnoxious to the utmost wrath of the rulers as well as of the people whom he reproved? No man perpetrates a forgery without the prospect of some benefit to be derived from it; a madman only would indite falsehoods, knowing that they must draw down upon his own head condign punishment. We are therefore justified in concluding that the forgery, if effected at all, could not be effected previous to the Babylonish captivity.

That the forgery could not have been effected posterior to the Babylonish captivity, we possess strong reasons for believing, independently of our acquaintance with the excessive national vanity of the Jews; which, however it might prompt them to devise fictions for the purpose of advancing the reputation of their ancestors, would never lead them to adopt a similar course for the sake of blasting it. It is a fact undeniable, that Hebrew ceased to be the living language of the Jewish people during the Babylonish captivity, and that all Jewish productions, after that period, were written either in Chaldee or in Greek. The unlearned Jews of Palestine, indeed, for some ages before the coming of our Saviour, were unable, without the assistance of a Chaldee paraphrase, to understand the Hebrew original; every book, therefore, which is written in pure Hebrew, must have been composed either before, or at the time of the Babylonish captivity. But that these books were not all written at the period of the Babylonish captivity, we have the same ground for asserting, which authorizes us to declare that the author of the Iliad was not contemporary with the author of the orations of Demosthenes, because the orations of Demosthenes differ not more widely in style and idiom from the Iliad of Homer,

than the Psalms of David differ from the Pentateuch, the writings of Isaiah from the Psalms, or the Book of Malachi from the Prophecies of Isaiah.

Strong, however, as these arguments may be, they are by no means the most conclusive which we are enabled to adduce, that no forgery ever was, or ever could have been effected, in the books of the Old Testament. Let it be borne in mind that these books profess to have been composed by different authors, at different periods, and for purposes widely different.

Some of them are historical; others legislative, or doctrinal; which, though partaking occasionally of the hyperbolical phraseology of the East, are, upon the whole, extremely simple and natural. Some, again, are avowedly prophetic, others avowedly argumentative, abounding in the figures of oriental rhetoric, and the images of oriental poetry; whilst all partake, more or less, of a mixed character, in which narrative appears side by side with prophecy, and prophecy, or sacred poetry, side by side with narrative or dissertation. It is extremely difficult to believe that any impostor would dream of adopting such a system, which, whilst it gives to the work, upon the whole, a marked and peculiar character, seems to throw an obvious air of inconsistency over its detached and separate parts. But this is not all.

The Canonical books of the Old Testament, or those which the Jews have always received as written by the inspiration of God, are the same which were treated with peculiar respect by the primitive Christians, and are now admitted into the canon of the reformed churches of Europe. They were, of old, divided into three classes; of which the first comprehended the five Books of Moses: the second, all the Prophets, or books believed to have been written by prophets; and the third, those treatises or poems, the design of which was either to celebrate the praises of the Most High, or to inculcate lessons of piety and

morality among men. A classification similar to this seems to be recognised likewise in the New Testament, where our Lord speaks of those things which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning him ; for, as Dr. Lightfoot justly observes, the term Psalms comprehends all that class of which we have spoken as devotional, and to which the Psalms, as being the introductory book, gave a title.

But the more specific order into which the books of the Old Testament were arranged, was as follow :

In Class I. were—

Books of Moses —5 Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy.

In Class II. were—

Books of the former
Prophets—4 . . . Joshua
Judges and Ruth
Samuel 1 and 2
Kings 1 and 2.

In Class III. were—

Books of the latter
Prophets—4 . . . Isaiah
Jeremiah and his Lamentations
Ezekiel
The Books of the 12 lesser Prophets.

In Class IV. were—

The rest of the Holy
Writers—9 King David's Psalms
King Solomon's Proverbs
The Ecclesiastes
The Song of Songs
The Book of Job
The Book of Daniel
The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah
The Book of Esther
The Books of Chronicles, 1 and 2.

From this classification, it is abundantly evident, that the books of the Old Testament were regarded

by the Jews with different degrees of reverence ; indeed, it is well known, that there existed in our Saviour's day a numerous and powerful sect, which rejected the authority of all, except those ascribed to Moses, and enumerated together under the first head.

That these heretics erred in denying the Divine authority of the rest, cannot be doubted ; yet it is indisputable, that the Books of Moses, more than all the others, were and are entitled to peculiar reverence ; because in them is contained the complete code of the Jewish law and religion, with a history of the stupendous events on which is founded the whole scheme of revealed truth. It is of the utmost importance, therefore, to ascertain their authenticity and Divine origin, that being a matter upon which rests all the foundation of our faith and hope ; for, if they be proved to be what they profess to be, the authenticity of the others, which continually appeal to, and depend upon them, follows as a matter of course.

Nobody will deny that, if the miracles recorded in the Book of Exodus, and the other writings of the Hebrew Lawgiver, were really performed : if, as is there related, the firstborn of the Egyptians were all cut off in one night, and the children of Israel passed through the Red Sea, the waters standing like walls on their right hand and on their left, it follows, as a necessary consequence, that Moses was commissioned by God, in whose hand he was, as he represents himself to have been, a mere instrument.

He, therefore, who supposes that these great works were not performed, must affirm, that the books in which they are recorded were forged ; and that the forgery took place, either at the era when the miracles are stated to have been wrought, or at some subsequent period. In other words, it must be assumed, either that there was such a man as Moses, who really conducted his countrymen out of Egypt, and really wrote these books, filling them with fictitious legends, which

he persuaded his contemporaries to receive as truths, or that the books were compiled in some generation posterior to the epoch of the Exode, and imposed as authentic documents upon the people.

That they could not be forged at the era in which the miracles are stated to have been wrought, a very slight degree of reflection will suffice to point out. These books inform the people for whose use they were written, that the author, after having inflicted various plagues upon Pharaoh and his subjects, brought them, with their flocks, their herds, and all their other moveable property, with a high hand, out of Egypt; that they were led by a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night, to the brink of the Red Sea, where the enemy, who followed in chariots and on horses, overtook them; that to make a way for their escape, Moses stretched out his rod towards the sea, which became immediately divided, leaving a dry space walled in on either side by the waters; that through this space the Israelites marched in perfect security; whilst the Egyptians, plunging in after them, were, upon the arrival of the fugitives at the opposite shore, overwhelmed by the returning waves. Is it consistent with reason to believe, that Moses, or any other man, could persuade upwards of six hundred thousand persons, however illiterate or barbarous, that they had actually witnessed these miraculous works, if no such miracles were wrought. Be it observed, that there is no attempt, in the Book of Exodus, at mystery or concealment. Their author appeals continually to the experience of his readers, as to men who had themselves seen and heard the wonders which he records; is it conceivable that any person inditing a tissue of gross falsehoods, would adopt such language? Will any man pretend to say, that the most eloquent writer in England, or in the world, could persuade six hundred thousand Cherokee Indians, were it possible to collect so great a crowd together, that he had, last week, or

last month, divided the Mississippi, ten miles below New Orleans, by stretching out a rod towards it; that he led them through the channel from the state of West Florida into Louisiana, the waters standing like walls, on the right hand and on the left; and that by merely stretching out his rod again, he caused the river to resume its ordinary course, overwhelming an army of Kentuckee back-woodsmen, who were in pursuit of them? The Cherokees are certainly in a more degraded state than were the Israelites at the period of the Exode; yet we take it upon us to affirm, not only that such a deception could not be passed upon them, but that no sane person, far less a man possessed of the splendid talents which undeniably belonged to the author of the Book of Exodus, would so much as dream of making the attempt.

But though not forged at the era in question, is it not rational to believe that the forgery took place at some subsequent period, and that a rude and barbarous people were easily persuaded to receive as authentic, statements which humoured their prejudices, and flattered their national vanity?

We have already shown, and every one acquainted with the national character of the Jews must be aware, that the books of the Old Testament, more especially the Pentateuch, could not be welcomed by that people as favouring their prejudices and flattering their vanity.

To the extreme disposition towards idolatry, which long prevailed among them, as well as to a thousand personal indulgences to which they were prone, these books stand strongly opposed; whilst the account which they give of the origin and early history of the Israelites, is certainly not such as to please a people vain beyond all others, and jealous even to this day of their renown. But this is the feeblest objection to which the theory is liable.

It is asserted in the books of which Moses claims to be the writer, that they were delivered by him to

the congregation, and carefully preserved from his day in the ark of the covenant; an ark which, upon the supposition stated above, had no existence prior to the forgery. It is further asserted, that they contain not only a history of certain miracles wrought by their author, but the statutes, or municipal law of the land, with which the people were required to make themselves familiarly acquainted, and of which correct copies were always to be in the possession of the priests and of the supreme magistrate. Now, on the supposition that these various declarations were without foundation, that the books were not the work of Moses, but the production of some later age, how is it possible to believe that the most astute-minded Israelite could for one moment be persuaded to receive them as authentic. So far from being acquainted with these statutes, the people never could have heard of them before; there could be no copy found either with the king, or the priests, or in the ark; yet, containing as they do the statute-law of the land, is it conceivable that, if they had existed, they could have been concealed? Could any man at this day forge a book of statutes for England or Russia, and at the same time persuade the inhabitants of either country, that it was the only book of statutes which they had ever known? Since the world began, was there ever a book of spurious statutes, and these, too, multifarious and burdensome, imposed upon any people as the very statutes by which they and their fathers had been governed for ages? Such a forgery is evidently impossible.

But in the Books of Moses are to be found internal proof of authenticity, such as shall be sought for in vain in any other collection of ancient statutes.

They not only contain the law of the Israelites, but they give an historical account of each enactment, and they assign the reasons upon which it is founded. They assert, for example, that the rite of circumcision was

instituted as a mark of the covenant between God and the founder of the Jewish nation ; and, that the practice was enforced by a declaration from the Almighty, that every uncircumcised man-child should be cut off from his people. They describe minutely as well the institution of the Passover, as the course of events which led to it ; they declare that the firstborn of the Israelites were on that solemn occasion consecrated to God, who was pleased to accept the tribe of Levi in their room ; that of this tribe, and of it only, the priests were to be chosen, the penalty of death being denounced against the person of any other tribe who should approach the altar, or touch the ark ; and that Aaron's budding rod was kept in that sacred chest, in memory of the destruction of Korah and his adherents, for their rebellion against the priesthood. Is it possible, if all these things had not been practised among the Hebrews from the era of Moses, with a retrospect to the signal mercies which they are said to commemorate, that any man, or any body of men, could have persuaded a whole nation, by means of forged books, that they had always religiously observed such institutions ? Is it conceivable that, at any period posterior to the Exode, the Israelites could have been persuaded, that they and their fathers had all been circumcised on the eighth day from their birth, had the case not been so ? or, that the Passover was kept in memory of the deliverance from Egypt, had no such festival been known among them ? Is it conceivable, that throughout a long course of ages, no daring spirit would have arisen, to put to the test the threatened penalty, by sacrificing upon the altar and touching the ark ? Such suppositions are perfectly inadmissible.

But it may be said, that all the rites and ceremonies to which the Israelites were subject had existed for ages prior to the appearance of this forgery, and that the people, ignorant of their origin, gladly gave credit to a performance which assigned for each a de-

finite cause. No man can, we think, peruse the ceremonial law of the Israelites, or make himself acquainted with the variety and complexity of the ordinances there enjoined, yet believe that to such a system any nation would, from generation to generation, continue obedient, unless some excellent reason subsisted to enforce obedience. We find, indeed, from the history of this singular people, that, even with a full conviction on their minds, that their law came from God, they were, during many centuries, continually rebelling against it; and that they were brought to submission only by repeated punishments, varying in kind and in severity, according to the degree of guilt incurred. With these undeniable facts before us, is it to be credited for a moment, that they would have voluntarily adhered during many ages, to these burdensome rites, ignorant all the while of the very groundwork on which they rested? Again, according to this supposition, though the rites were all in existence previous to the publication of the Books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, it was not till these books appeared, that so much as one of them was traced back to its source, or attributed to any distinct or definite cause. Now, what is the necessary consequence of this? That a numerous people were so completely hoodwinked by some nameless impostor, as to receive as familiar to their earliest recollections, statements and assertions which, till the appearance of his forgery, had never been heard of? Is such a palpable contradiction to the dictates of all experience admissible? Is it not, on the contrary, much more reasonable to conclude, that an attempt so extravagant would have been met by the derision of those on whom it was made? The Israelites circumcised their children, it appears, they knew not why, and they kept the Passover on grounds equally vague. Such had been the practice among them for ages, till at last there arose an ingenious person, who assured

them that they and their ancestors performed the painful rite in question, as a mark of the covenant entered into between God and Abraham; that the festival was celebrated in commemoration of the destruction of their enemies and their own deliverance—and that they knew these statements to be true. Would not the people exclaim with one voice, that the assertion was absolutely false, because, till this spurious book appeared, they had never heard either of the pretended covenant or the pretended deliverance? On the whole, therefore, we are led to conclude, that the Books of Moses could not have been forged at any era posterior to that at which they profess to have been written; and as we have already shown that a forgery at that era was totally impossible, it follows, as a matter of course, that the books are genuine and authentic.

Such is one out of many chains of argument by which the authenticity and Divine origin of the four last books of the Pentateuch have been demonstrated. With respect to the first, it may suffice to observe, that the fact of its existence previous to the appearance of the others, and of its being a work of the same hand by which they were produced, is proved by the repeated allusions made in them to circumstances nowhere recorded except in it—allusions which carry upon the face of them incontestable evidence, that they are not made as quotations from the work of some strange author, but by the writer of a connected history, who draws the attention of his readers at one stage of his narrative to events which have been more fully detailed at another. Thus, the Book of Exodus, after a brief and meagre repetition of the names of Isaac's sons, opens with a statement which, but for the facts previously narrated at length in the Book of Genesis, would be perfectly unintelligible. Again, the sacred historian, in the memoir which he gives of himself, informs us, that on a certain occasion, he

was met by an angel, who threatened to put him to death, because he had permitted one of his sons to remain uncircumcised up to that hour. Why was he guilty of a crime in this neglect? It is only by turning to the Book of Genesis, in which the origin of circumcision is detailed, that we can answer this question, seeing that no particular mention is made in Exodus of that ceremony as one of divine appointment. So also is it with reference to the observance of the Sabbath, concerning which, the Lord is represented as demanding of Moses, "How long will ye refuse to keep my commandments and my laws?" when as yet no laws relating to that day are stated in Exodus to have been delivered. The reason of that demand, however, is to be found in the second chapter of Genesis, where it is related, that, "on the seventh day, God rested from all his works that he had created and made, and that therefore he blessed and sanctified that day for ever." We could adduce many instances besides these, in which the author of the Book of Exodus alludes to occurrences told only in the Book of Genesis, yet assumed to be familiarly known to all his readers; but these are enough to satisfy every impartial person, that, whoever the author of the Book of Genesis might be, the book itself must have been in existence before that of Exodus made its appearance. The Jews however affirm, that Genesis, not less than Exodus, was written by their inspired lawgiver; and as the style is precisely the same throughout both performances, without any name being on record as the author of the former book, it is fair to conclude that their opinion rests upon a true foundation.

If it be asked, whence Moses could derive his materials for the history of the first ages of the world, it may suffice to answer, that a person writing, as he wrote under the guidance of the Most High, could be at no loss for sources of information, as complete as

they were authentic. It has indeed been believed by several able divines, that the Book of Genesis was compiled from written documents preserved by Noah in the ark, and regularly transmitted through Shem to Abraham, and through Abraham to Moses. There is at least nothing impossible in this; for the notion that the use of letters was unknown to our antediluvian ancestors, seems now to be universally rejected; and the theory, if adopted, obviates at once any difficulty that may be supposed to exist touching the foundation of the Mosaic annals. But we must, after all, have recourse to inspiration, operating at least so far upon the mind of Moses, as to hinder him from placing upon record any statements which were not in all respects true; and if we allow that the Divinity interfered at all, as it is impossible to do otherwise, we may likewise allow, without injury to the fame of the historian, that he interfered throughout. The question, however, is one of no importance. Wherever Moses obtained his materials, we cannot doubt that they were ample, and that the Spirit of God effectually guided him in making proper use of them.*

With respect to the other books which complete the canon of the Old Testament, as it is difficult to imagine how any one can reject them, who is satisfied of the authenticity of the Pentateuch, we shall not enter into any argument for the purpose of proving that they

* The same mode of reasoning which has been employed to demonstrate the authenticity and Divine authority of the first five books of the Old Testament, may, by a mere change of terms, be used to show, that the four Gospels of St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke, and St. John, together with the book of the Acts of the Apostles, and the twenty-one canonical tracts which succeed them, were all written by the individuals whose names they bear, and all relate to matters of fact. The authors of these several treatises speak of themselves as eyewitnesses of the miracles which they describe; they appeal to their readers as to persons living in the same age and country, and of consequence fully competent to judge of the truth of their assertions; and they take all Judea to witness, inasmuch as they represent every

deserve the unqualified credit of all readers. Of the prophetic tracts, it is sufficient to observe, that they have already received, and are daily receiving, the strongest testimony in their favour, by the exact fulfilment of their numerous and wonderful predictions; of the devotional treatises, that their own purity sufficiently recommends them; whilst the historical books are no more to be rejected, than any other series of well-attested and faithfully-preserved annals. But we need not pursue the subject further. The Bible is to be read or rejected, not piece by piece, but as a whole. If the books with which it opens be of a Divine original, as has, we think, been satisfactorily shown, there is no ground for refusing our assent to those that follow, of which it may be truly asserted, that they contain nothing but what perfectly and accurately accords with the spirit and design of the Pentateuch.

Before bringing this Introduction to a close, we think it right to warn the reader, that we have rejected, as manifestly erroneous and corrupt, the system of chronology established by Usher, on the authority of the Masoretic text. It would lead us into details quite foreign from the design of the present work, were we to assign our reasons at length for the course which we have found it necessary to adopt. Enough therefore is done, when we state, that the chronology of the Hebrew Bible abounds with contradictions and inconsistencies; that it is at variance with that of the Samaritan and of the Septuagint versions, as well as with the calculations of Josephus, and with the voice of antiquity, and that there is no longer the

one of the wonderful deeds of their Master to have been performed openly in the sight of crowds. Men desirous of palming a fiction on any people, however credulous, never act thus. The miracles recorded of Mohammed are all stated to have been performed in secret; and hence, the credibility of his immediate intercourse with the Divine Being rests entirely upon his own unsupported assertion.

smallest ground of doubt that it has been rendered thus faulty, not through accident or the blunders of transcribers, but by design. We have accordingly taken as our guide Dr. Hales's very able analysis of ancient chronology, as being by far the most rational and consistent treatise with which we are acquainted; and we have regularly transcribed from it, at the head of each chapter, the dates within which its principal events befell. The following enumeration of the Jewish months—of the monies, weights, and measures of length and of capacity, may be of use to a right understanding of several events recorded in the history.

JEWISH MONTHS.

INCLUDING PARTS OF

1 Nisan or Abib . . .	{ March April
2 Jan or Zif	{ April May
3 Sivan	{ May June
4 Thamuz	{ June July
5 Ab	{ July August
6 Elul	{ August September
7 Aign, Ethanim or Tesri	{ September October
8 Marchesan or Beel .	{ October November
9 Chisleu	{ November December
10 Thebeth	{ December January
11 Shebeth	{ January February
12 Adar	{ February March

With an intercalary month (Escadar) thrown in, when the beginning of Nisan would otherwise be carried back to the end of February.

JEWISH MONEY.

	£	s.	d.
The Gerah	0	0	1½
The Hebrew Drachm	0	0	9
Two Drachms make a Bekah	0	1	6
Two Bekahs make a Shekel	0	3	0
Sixty Shekels make a Mina	9	0	0
Fifty Minas make a Talent	450	0	0
A Talent of Gold, sixteen to one	7200	0	0

JEWISH WEIGHTS.

	lbs.	oz.	grs.	drs.
The Gerah	0	0	10	95
The Hebrew Drachm or Zuza	0	0	54	75
Two Zuzas make a Bekah	0	0	109½	0
Two Bekahs make a Shekel	0	0	219	0
A hundred Shekels make a Mineth	50	0	0	0
Thirty Mineths one Talent	1500	0	0	0

MEASURES OF LENGTH.

	Feet.	Inch.
The Cubit, somewhat more than	0	21
The Zenth or Span, do.	0	10
The Span of a cubit, do.	0	7
The Palm or Hand-breadth, do.	0	3
The Fathom=4 cubits, do.	7	0
Ezekiel's Reed=6 cubits, do.	10	0
The Chin=80 cubits, do.	145	0
A Sabbath day's Journey=2000 cubits	3456	0
	<i>Miles. Paces.</i>	
A Mile=4000 cubits	1	10
A Day's Journey=about	33	0

MEASURES OF CAPACITY.

The Cab=a quarter of a peck.
 The Omer=the tenth part of a bushel.
 The Ephah=about a bushel.
 The Homer=ten bushels.

LIQUID MEASURES.

The Log contained about a Pint.
 16 Logs=one Hin, answers to one Gallon.
 6 Hins=one Bath=6 Gallons.
 10 Baths=one Homer=60 Gallons.

It will be seen that, in conducting our argument in favour of the authenticity of the Pentateuch, we have taken no notice of lesser objections—such as are sometimes urged against the credibility of particular facts mentioned there. These will be remarked upon as we proceed; but there is a circumstance of the kind which we deem it right to discuss here, rather because of its excessive prominence, than its importance. It has been objected to the History of Moses, that circumstances are from time to time recorded, such as it is quite impossible for Moses himself to have introduced: as, for example, names are given to places which they obtained in later times, and remarks are made apposite only on the supposition that the writer speaks to men ignorant of antiquity. Above all, the narrative of the inspired penman's death has furnished food for ridicule to many who find it more convenient to sneer than to argue. We have only to remark, that such expressions as these give to the details, in general, an air of truth which they certainly could not have had without them. No impostor would fall into blunders so palpable, or so easily detected, though the interpolations alluded to are precisely such as the individual or individuals, who revised or edited the works of Moses, may be supposed to have inserted. Thus, the account of the lawgiver's death came doubtless from the pen of Joshua, who succeeded Moses in the guidance of Israel; whilst all such expressions as "the Canaanite was then in the land," and "as remaineth until this day," are clearly attributable to the pen of Ezra, or the person, whoever he might be, that completed the Jewish canon. Infidelity is driven to its last shifts, when it has recourse to quibbles so contemptible.

CHAPTER I.

The design of Moses in writing the History of the Creation.—Objections stated and answered.

A. M. 1.—B. C. 5411.

THE great design of Moses, when composing the first book of his history, appears to have been not only to give an account of the early ages of the world, but to guard the Israelites against the prevailing idolatry of his time, the worship of the heavenly bodies, since known by the designation of Zabaism. With this view, he commences his annals by declaring, that, in the beginning, God created or called into existence the Heavens and the Earth—a phrase which is frequently employed in Scripture to denote not merely the solar system, but all the corporeal substances, whether to us visible or invisible, which are scattered over the regions of boundless space. By this brief sentence he strikes at the root of every disposition to worship the heavenly bodies. These, so far from being gods, are pronounced to spring, in common with the human race, from the will of Jehovah; and hence, in common with the human race, to be creatures continually dependent for support on the power that created them.

At what precise era a work so stupendous was effected, the inspired historian pretends not to make known. He describes, indeed, with sufficient minute-

ness, the process which our system underwent, when at the command of its Almighty Maker, it emerged from chaos into order; but when it was that God first willed the existence of that universe of which our system forms a part, we are furnished with no ground upon which to hazard so much as a conjecture. That it must have been anterior to the era of the Mosaic cosmogony, that it was probably long anterior to that era, other passages of Scripture have, however, instructed us. We learn, from the Book of Job, that when the foundations of the earth were laid, "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy;" and as these beings must have had some local habitation, we are justified in concluding, that they and the world of which they are inhabitants were in existence, at least, previously to the era of the six days' creation. The first verse of the first chapter of Genesis is accordingly to be read as detailing events quite distinct from those detailed in the verses which immediately follow. It refers exclusively to that moment, be it when it might, when Almighty God first saw fit to exercise his goodness, in bestowing a separate existence upon his creatures.

The same silence which Moses has preserved touching the beginning of time, properly so called, distinguishes his account of the creation of the matter of which our system is composed. We are told, indeed, that "God created the heavens and the earth," and that "the earth was without form and void, darkness being upon the deep, when the Spirit of God moved or brooded upon the face of the waters:" but how long the solar system had lain in this state previous to its reduction into order, we are left without any data from which to draw a conclusion. From this circumstance, an opinion has, we believe, generally prevailed, that the very matter of our system had no existence till within the limited period of six or seven thousand years ago. There is nothing absolutely impossible in this; neither would the idea, though admitted, dero-

gate in the smallest degree from the goodness or glory of the Creator. With Him, and with Him alone, must rest both the power and will to decide when any thing shall begin, as well as when it shall cease to be ; and it is very certain that the pushing back of the act of creation, so to speak, millions of millions of years, would bring it no nearer to that which the poverty of human language compels us to call the fountain-head of time. No assignable quantity of successive duration bears any proportion to eternity ; and hence, he who is disposed to cavil with the Mosaic history, on the ground that “ the glory of Almighty God manifested in his works cannot be limited to the short space of six or seven thousand years,” might urge his objection with the very same reason to a period ten thousand times more remote. But as objections have been started by geologists to the Mosaic account, arising out of the discovery of phenomena inconsistent, as they contend, with the notion of the world’s extreme youth, it may be worth while to show not only that there is nothing in Scripture forbidding us to believe that the present is but the wreck of a former world, but a great deal, as well in revelation as in natural science, to induce a persuasion that the case really is so.

With respect to arguments on this head drawn from Scripture, these must of necessity pretend to no greater weight than attaches to every species of analogical reasoning. We learn there that God is a being whose designs never alter—one in whom “ is no variableness, neither shadow of turning ;” and hence we not unnaturally arrive at the conclusion, that the laws by which he now governs, and declares that he shall hereafter govern the universe, must be the same according to which he has governed it in times past. One of these, however, seems clearly to be, that when this earth, or rather this system, shall have served its purpose, it shall pass away, or relapse into chaos, and

be succeeded by another. "The stars from heaven shall fall, the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up, the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll, and all the host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig-tree." Again St. John, in the language of prophecy, declares, "I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them; and I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God: and the sea gave up the dead that were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead that were in them; and they were judged every one according to their works." No one, we presume, can read these passages without being convinced that they refer to the awful period when this world, having served its purpose, shall be destroyed. But behold the issue. We learn, that "after the present heaven and the present earth shall have passed away, a new heaven and a new earth shall succeed them," and that "the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, shall appear as coming from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." From these expressions, combined and compared, we gather, that though, after the day of judgment, this world shall cease to be as it now is, the matter of which it is composed shall not be annihilated, but being arranged into new order, after a certain duration in chaos, shall give support to a new race of inhabitants. Reasoning from this again, by analogy, we conclude, that it is at least probable that some such occurrence took place previous to the Mosaic cosmogony; and as Scripture nowhere forbids the idea, we shall cheerfully give to it admission, if we turn, in a proper frame of mind, to the sources of knowledge which natural science has opened out to us.

It was observed by a pious and eminent philoso-

pher,* that “as the system of Jupiter and his satellites, is but an epitome of the great solar system to which he belongs, may not this be, in its turn, a faint representation of that grand system of the universe, round whose centre this sun, with his attending planets, and an inconceivable multitude of like systems, do in reality revolve, according to the law of gravitation? Now will our apprehension of chaos and ruin be changed into the contemplation of a countless number of nicely-adjusted motions, all proclaiming the sustaining hand of God!” The ideas excited by such language as this are, indeed, grand and overpowering; yet, as the same author observes, they seem to be justified by reason and analogy, and have accordingly been cherished by every philosopher who has thoroughly understood the Newtonian theory of the universe. It is true that gravitation, which is the basis of that theory, can be considered as nothing more than a mere fact or law of nature, by which all bodies tend towards one another; and if we search for the cause of that tendency, we shall speedily find ourselves compelled to resolve it into the fiat of the Almighty Creator. The same is the case with respect to the centrifugal or projectile force, which counterbalances the force of gravitation: it can be referred to nothing but the same Almighty power, emphatically called by Professor Robison, “the sustaining hand of God.” But as we know from universal experience, that God’s ordinary operations are carried on not by partial, but by general laws, it seems to follow, that, from the very beginning, the masses of matter which compose this universal system have been so distributed and arranged, as to balance each other; and that, as soon as one subordinate system was reduced to order, and began to revolve round the common centre of the whole, the chaotic masses out

* The late Professor Robison, of Edinburgh.

of which the other systems were afterwards formed, were made to revolve round the common centre likewise. According to this theory, then, the first great act of creation was not only instantaneous, but universal. God said, Let the universe be, and it arose; though whether in the beautiful order which now pervades it, or having some systems only arranged whilst others rolled round the common centre in chaos, as we have no means of arriving at any thing like knowledge, so are we without authority to hazard a conjecture.

Before passing on to other subjects, we esteem it fair towards ourselves, to remind the reader of a fact of which, however, he can hardly be supposed to be ignorant. "It is beyond dispute," says the same learned Professor,* whose words we have already quoted, "that several stars in the catalogues of Hipparchus, of Ulugh Beigh, of Tycho Brahe, and even of Flamstead, are no more to be seen:—they are gone, and have left no trace." How is this to be accounted for, and what has become of them? There is no reason to believe, either from revelation or experience, that so much as one atom of matter has been *annihilated* since the beginning of the world. That matter has changed its forms, passing from confusion into order, and from order into confusion, from vigour into decay, and from the dissolution of one body into the renovation of another, is indisputable; but nothing, as far as we can discover, has been reduced into nonentity, even by combustion itself. Is it not reasonable then, to suppose, that those stars which have certainly disappeared, were the luminous centres of such systems as our own, and that, having served the purpose for which they were formed, they are now reduced to that chaotic state in which the sacred historian assures us that the solar system was, when "the earth was without form and void, and

* Professor Robison's Elements of Mechanical Philosophy.

darkness upon the face of the deep," and that when it shall seem good to the Divine Architect, the matter of which they are composed may again be restored to beauty and regularity of form. Nor is the incontestable fact to be passed over, in the consideration of this theory, that new stars are continually appearing in the heavens. May not these be the restoration to order of systems which had formerly been reduced to chaos, and thereby rendered invisible, so that the process of forming and destroying worlds may have been carried on from the beginning, and may be continued through all eternity, according to the will of the Supreme Creator and Governor of the universe, who neither slumbers nor sleeps, and whose eternal Son has declared, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."

Such are some of many reasons which lead us to believe, that as there is nothing in the Bible which arbitrarily limits the existence of the matter of this world to the space of six or seven thousand years, so there is a great deal, both in nature and revelation, which would induce a contrary persuasion. If, therefore, it be true, that modern geologists have discovered fossil bones, such as must have belonged to species or genera of animals now nowhere existing, either on the earth or in the sea; if the destruction of these genera or species cannot be accounted for by the general Deluge, or any other catastrophe to which our globe in its present state has been subject; and if it be equally true that there are towards the surface of the earth, strata, which could not have been so disposed, except by some watery mass resting upon them for a longer period than the duration of Noah's flood; the facts may be satisfactorily accounted for, without, in the most remote degree, invalidating the truth of the Mosaic history. That history, as far as it comes down, pretends to give no account of other worlds, to which ours may have but succeeded. It is the history

of the present earth, and of its primeval inhabitants; and we have the authority of one of the most scientific and ingenious geologists,* of either ancient or modern times, that the human race cannot be more ancient than it is represented to be in the writings of the Hebrew Lawgiver.—With that history we now proceed.

The Mosaic account of the cosmogony, or, to speak more correctly, of the reduction of chaos into order, though given in words as few and as simple as could be employed, constitutes one of the most sublime pieces of composition in any language. Almighty God, it appears, having for wise purposes determined that the important change should take place gradually and slowly, devoted six periods of time, or, as Scripture expresses it, six entire days to the great work of creation. During the first of these, he called into being “light,” that most subtle and penetrating of all corporeal substances, which is known to force its way into all others; and having seen that it was good, he collected its scattered rays into masses, thus dividing, to use the language of the inspired Historian, “light from darkness,” and producing the succession of day and night. Hitherto darkness, the deepest and most profound, had reigned over the entire system, which lay in a confused heap, and was overwhelmed with a weight of waters; but the Spirit of God no sooner began to brood upon the surface of the deep, than its vivifying influence was felt, and the germs or seeds of future life and vegetation were every where produced. Nor was the effect of the “moving of the Spirit of God on the face of the deep,” however we may interpret the phrase, confined wholly to this. The several parts of our world, now recognised as the Sun, Jupiter, the Georgium Sidus, &c. &c., seem to have flown off at once into the

* Cuvier, in his *Essay on the Theory of the Earth*.

positions which they at present relatively occupy towards each other, where they underwent each a process adapted to its own peculiar wants, and to the important part which it was to play in the general arrangement of the whole. Thus, though Moses neither gives, nor can give, any details whatever of the more minute changes which occurred in other planets, there is no room to doubt that all were keeping pace with the earth during the week of creation; and that, at its close, not only was our globe rendered fit to receive the inhabitants destined to occupy it, but the rest were, in a similar degree, brought to the highest state of perfection of which they were capable.

The next thing that Almighty God commanded was, that the waters, which as yet universally overspread the face of chaos, should separate, so that the firmament, or terrestrial atmosphere, might appear. This was instantly done, one portion ascending up into ether, where it hung suspended, whilst another fell down over the entire surface of the globe; and the firmament or expanse left void by their separation, was called by the name of heaven. On the second day, therefore, was the delightful element of air distinguished from the chaos, and the globe appeared detached, and, as it were, held apart from the other more solid portions of the solar system. The third day again was devoted to the disjunction of the elements of earth and water, giving to the sea its bounds, and stocking the continents with vegetation. No sooner was the word spoken, than mountains reared their heads on high, causing the waters which had hitherto overflowed the entire compass of the globe, to subside into channels hollowed out for them, whilst trees, grasses, herbs, and plants of every kind, and applicable to all purposes, sprang up and clothed the surface of the ground with the most exquisite verdure. This, it will be seen, was necessary, in order to prepare

the earth for the reception of those living inhabitants which God designed to possess it: but previous to their creation, other matters behoved to be permanently arranged; and to the adjustment of these the fourth day was set apart.

Up to the present moment, the light which shed its influence over this and the other planets, seems not to have proceeded, as now, from one common source; but each planet was supplied from an aurora-like meteor, which was made to revolve within a given space round itself. We have the less hesitation in advancing this notion because the discoveries of modern science distinctly prove, that the sun, though undeniably the dispenser of light to the whole of his system, is not, in any sense of the word, the source of that light. "Philosophers," says Dr. Thomas Thomson,* "long supposed that this immense globe of matter (the sun) was undergoing a violent combustion, and to this cause they ascribed the immense quantity of light and heat which are constantly separating from it; but the late very curious and important observations of Dr. Herschel leave scarcely any room for doubting that this opinion is erroneous. From these observations, it follows, that the sun is a solid opaque globe, similar to the earth or other planets, and surrounded with an atmosphere of great density and extent. In this atmosphere there floats two regions of clouds; the lowermost of the two is opaque, and similar to the clouds which are formed in our atmosphere; but the higher region of clouds is luminous, and emits the immense quantity of light to which the splendour of the sun is owing. It appears, too, that these luminous clouds are subject to various changes, both in quantity and lustre. Hence, Dr. Herschel draws as a consequence, that the quantity of heat and light emitted by the sun varies in different seasons, and he supposes that this is

* See his *System of Chemistry*, Vol. I.

one of the chief sources of the differences between the the temperature of different years." That the region of luminous clouds spoken of here is composed of the several meteors which, up to the fourth day in the cosmogony, had served each its separate purpose, we see no reason to doubt; indeed, the terms in which the appointment of the sun and moon to their offices is expressed in the Book of Genesis, appear to us distinctly to prove the fact.

Perhaps there is no translation of equal magnitude, from a dead to a living language, which exhibits errors so few in number, or so unimportant in their consequences, as our authorized version of the Bible; yet even that great work, admirably executed though it be, is not in every particular perfect. The account given there, for example, of the division of night from day, and the final arrangement of the heavenly bodies as parts of our solar system, is not so accurate as it might be, and has, we believe, in more than one instance, excited uneasy feelings in the mere English reader. Thus, after having been informed, at verses 3, 4, and 5, of the first chapter of Genesis, that the creation of light took place on the first day of the cosmogony, we are told, in verses, 14, 15, and 16, that God, on the fourth day, said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of Heaven, &c.:" and that "God made two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night, and that he made the stars also." There unquestionably seems to be a contradiction here; for if light was formed on the first day, it could not be formed on the fourth day also; whilst the discoveries of modern science altogether preclude the notion, that either the sun or the moon is, in any sense of the expression, a light.

The truth, however, is, that the original Hebrew falls into no such mistakes as those incurred by our translators. The words employed by Moses, at verses 3 and 14 of this chapter, are totally different the one

from the other ; the former only expressing the *matter of light*, the latter signifying simply an instrument by which light is supported or dispensed ; and hence the difficulty of reconciling Scripture with itself, and with the discoveries of modern science, attaches only to the English translation. Light existed from the first day, though divided, as has been shown, and shed in portions, as it were, over each globe in our system ; whereas on the fourth, a centre for these scattered rays was established, and they were made to roll or collect themselves around it. Thus, the sun became a great light-bearer, or light-dispenser, immediately and directly ; whereas the moon, though an opaque body, acted a similar part towards this earth by reflection. With respect, again, to the phrase, “ and he made the stars also,” it is to be observed, that the words, “ he made,” are avowedly interpolations. They have no business whatever where they are, for the sacred historian is not now speaking of the creation of the stars at all ; he is merely stating, in the figurative language of poetry, that God made the moon the ruler or queen of the stars.

The adjustment of inanimate matter being thus finished, God proceeded, on the fifth day, to call into existence creatures endowed with vitality, and continuing to pursue the order which he had already adopted, he began with those kinds which may be said to rank lowest in the scale of animated nature. The waters were commanded to bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. The command was instantly obeyed. Fishes of every kind, from the great monarch of the waters, to the minute animalcule which the naked eye fails to detect, rose into being at the word of the Father of the Universe, whilst the air became peopled with all manner of flying creatures, from the lordly eagle down to the delicate wren. Upon these, Almighty God poured

forth his blessing, desiring them to be fruitful and multiply; thus providing, as it were, against the numerous dangers to which their peculiar mode of generation is exposed. This done, and all things having been pronounced good, he ceased from his work, "and the evening and the morning were the fifth day."

There remained now but one other period of time in which to complete the great task which Almighty God had set to himself. The sixth day no sooner came, than the earth received a command similar to that which had, on the day previous, been bestowed upon the sea; it was directed to "bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth after their kind; and it was so." In this threefold distribution, it is worthy of remark, that every distinct animal genus which exists upon the earth, man alone excepted, is, by the idiom of the Hebrew tongue, included. Under the head of cattle are comprehended all tame and domestic creatures designed for the use and benefit of man; as oxen, sheep, horses, &c. The term beast is applied to all wild animals, such as lions, bears, wolves, which live apart from human society; whilst creeping things are particularized to denote reptiles of every description, from the huge boa constrictor down to the grub. Thus were all things put in order: the earth covered with plants, the waters stored with fishes, the air replenished with fowl, and the land peopled with irrational animals; whilst the sun and the moon executing their destined offices in the system, were towards the globe for signs and for seasons. One thing alone remained to be done, in order to bring the work of creation to a close; and to that Almighty God immediately addressed himself.

Throughout the infant world there was not yet to be found any living creature endowed with such faculties as might render it capable of understanding, duly ap-

preciating, and, as a necessary consequence, fully enjoying, the great goodness of the Creator. Living things there were in abundance, each of which tasted as much of happiness as is consistent with the possession of mere instinct; but the rational mind was not among them, without which not only would the riches of the earth be wasted, but the link between angels and beings so low as the brutes would be wanting. To supply this defect, and to exhibit to "the sons of God," in a still more palpable point of view, proofs of his boundless power and benevolence, the Almighty determined to create MAN; and he proceeded to fulfil that determination with a solemnity and deliberation altogether worthy of the work which he had taken in hand.

The words put into the mouth of God by the inspired historian on this occasion, have received from commentators more than one interpretation. Whilst some suppose that the expression "Let us make man," implies a species of consultation between the three persons in the ever-blessed Trinity, others have referred it to a solemn declaration addressed by the Divine Architect to the ministering spirits around him; the plural being used, as we are in the habit of seeing it used by earthly potentates, as a more dignified and royal form of speech than the singular. It is not for us to decide, at least in this place, upon a question of which we may remark, that the solution is to be found only by him who seeks for it throughout the Bible at large; but, whatever the true import of the phrase may be, one idea it undeniably excites, namely, that the creation of man was esteemed by God, and represented to other beings, as something far more excellent and important than the creation of any other terrestrial creature. The same feelings are kept alive, if not strengthened, as we proceed onwards with the remarkable detail. We are not told that God commanded the earth or the water to bring forth man,

as he had commanded it to bring forth other animals; but that he formed an image out of the dust, or clay, and having breathed into it the breath of life, that man became a living soul. Thus was the very body of man, that frail machine in which the invisible and restless soul is lodged, moulded and knit together, as it were, by the fingers of the Almighty; whilst the spirit, or living principle, with its innumerable qualities, its faculties, powers, capabilities, and aspirations, came immediately and directly from the Father of the Universe. Nor is the inspired penman content to excite our wonder, even by such memorials as these. He informs us that God, having resolved to create man, said, "Let us make him in our own image, after our likeness: and let him have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." Thus was man formed not only with peculiar care, but expressly in the image of his Maker, and to him, as the representative of his Almighty Master, were all other terrestrial animals rendered subject.

We are well aware that the expression, "the image of God," has been frequently understood to signify that peculiar innocence and uprightness by which man, when he came first from the hands of God, was distinguished. Without doubt, the peculiar innocence referred to was not without its effect, in rendering man more perfectly than he has ever since been the image or representative of God; but we apprehend that the similitude spoken of in the first chapter of Genesis, was far from consisting, either wholly or principally, in the quality of innocence. It appears to us, that the phrase, if rightly interpreted, implies that man was appointed by the Creator of all to stand towards the inferior animals in a light somewhat similar to that in which He himself stands towards man; and hence, that upon earth, man represents or bears the image of

God, somewhat in the same sense in which the governor of a province is said to represent or bear the image of his Sovereign. If it be asked wherein this similitude consists, we answer, that it is to be sought for in the whole being of man; in his moral, intellectual, and corporeal constitution, the combination of which renders him, even now, an object of instinctive dread to the fiercest animal that prowls the forest. That man was more completely the image or representative of God previous to the Fall, than he has ever since been, is proved by the fact, that all animals, even such as are now the most savage, dwelt in harmony with him; but that he *wholly* ceased to act in the Divine similitude, after he forfeited his innocence, seems to be a notion unsupported either by reason or revelation. We know by experience that man still retains “a dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth;” whilst God himself assigns as his reason to Noah and his sons for the prohibition of murder, that “man’s blood was not to be shed, because in the image of God created he man.”

The globe being now supplied not only with herbs and inferior animals, but with man, the appointed head of all, God proceeded to bestow upon this his favoured creature, proofs more and more striking of his own bountiful goodness and of the high destinies which man was designed to accomplish. Adam no sooner rose into being, than his Almighty Master took him, as it were, under his own immediate tuition, and causing the whole of the brute creation to pass before him, instructed him in the use of language, by directing him how to bestow a name upon each. The injunction, likewise, to keep holy the Sabbath-day, appears to have been thus early given, since we are distinctly told that God hallowed that day, and this he could only do by directing his creature to keep it

holy. Yet even now, after so many acts of benevolence and power, God's labours were not completed. Man was alone; for, throughout the wide compass of creation, no "help meet for him" was to be found; and, till such were provided, his happiness could not be perfect. The same benevolence which prompted him to call man himself into existence, urged the Almighty to satisfy the natural desire of which his creature was conscious. "The Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof: and the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto him." Thus was the man, in common with the other living creatures, furnished with a fitting companion, connected with himself by the closest ties, being "bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh," and the great principle of mutual intercourse, with all its endearing and purifying effects, was established. The formation of woman was God's last creative work. His gracious design being accomplished, and the world brought to realize the idea which he had formed, the Divine Architect blessed his creatures; and after sanctifying and setting apart the seventh day as one of holy rest, ceased to produce any more.

Having thus described the process by which Almighty God created the world, we might, with perfect consistency, close the present chapter, were we not anxious to meet a few objections which have been offered to it by infidel reasoners. Some of these, indeed the principal of them, we have already noticed, particularly such as hinge upon the supposed difficulty attending the date of the Mosaic cosmogony, and the inspired author's history of light. But others have been started—such as, "Why should God expend six days in creating that which he might have called into its fullest order in a moment? and, whence arose the necessity of taking a rib from Adam's side, when

woman might have been formed, as man had been, from the dust?" In sober truth, we scarcely know how to meet such objections; not because they are formidable, or weighty, or abstruse, but because they are quite unworthy of a serious answer.

With respect to the dedication of six days to the cosmogony, instead of six instants, or one, the matter is, we presume, very satisfactorily to be explained by the assertion, that such was the will of God. There cannot be a doubt that the power that was competent to create at all, was competent to create just as effectually in the twinkling of an eye, as in a century; and hence we may rest assured, that God, in devoting six days to the work, was actuated by some wise and good design. Probably he desired, that those "morning stars" which surrounded his throne should obtain a clear insight into his glorious proceedings. There is nothing unworthy of God in this; since we know, upon the authority of Scripture, that there are designs of the Most High, into which "his angels desire to look;" and to grant to them, as far as they may be capable of receiving it, an increase of knowledge, would only be to act with the perfect benevolence which characterizes all the Creator's proceedings. But there is another reason to be assigned, which, as it refers to man himself, will probably be received with greater readiness by such as are disposed to seek a reason at all. God acted in the case before us, as a great and unerring pattern for our imitation. He established the sanctity of the Sabbath, that most humane and merciful of all sublunary arrangements, as well by example as precept, and placed it upon a footing more secure, than by any other means it could have acquired. We are not now saying that these were the motives which directed God, in his choice of time, for the mode of creation. We only assert, that had such been his motives, they would have been both rational and noble; but we refer the arrangement itself freely to his

good pleasure, to which alone, under any circumstances, the act of creation is referrible.

The same argument which meets one weak objection, will with equal force apply to another. God took from the body of man the substance out of which he formed woman, because so it seemed best to him, and he probably did so for the purpose of instituting "the holy estate of matrimony," by showing that man and woman were created for mutual support and kindness. The speech of our first father, indeed, appears to meet the difficulty, if such there be, with so much effect, that we transcribe it; nor shall we weaken its effect by any comment of our own. "And Adam said, This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh: and she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh."

There is but one other difficulty which we esteem it worth while to consider, and which arises entirely out of a misapprehension of the design of Moses in writing. "Is it not remarkable that this small globe, by no means the largest in its own system, and as a drop of water to the sea when compared with the universe, should be regarded by the great Creator as the chief of his works? yet Moses every where expresses himself, as if the sun, the moon, and other heavenly bodies, were nothing more than ministers to our wants."

We answer, that Moses wrote not to instruct mankind in astronomy, but to convey to his own countrymen, a simple and pastoral people, just notions of the Divine nature. He therefore speaks of other planets wholly as they seem to affect us; but he by no means affirms that they were called into existence for our benefit alone. On the contrary, we are left to form concerning them what conjectures we please, provided we regard them, as they must be regarded, as creatures of the great Creator; whilst his details are uni-

formly confined to the single subject of this world's early history. It is very possible, that other worlds have histories of their own, in which our globe is made to bear the same relation towards them, which they bear towards us; at least, he who believes so, believes that which is nowise contradictory to the Mosaic chronicle. But it is idle to reason upon such a point. Moses nowhere represents this globe as the chief of God's works; he only represents man as the creature, to the supply of whose wants the elements are mainly directed; and in doing this, he surely claims for the human race no more than even a quibbling philosopher will accord.

CHAPTER II.

The Paradisaical History.—The Fall.—Its consequences.—Objections answered.

A. M. 1 to 100.—B. C. 5411 to 5311.

It has been stated in the previous chapter, that the Mosaic account of the Creation, though sublime above all other specimens of human composition, is as concise as it could well be, consistently with the conveyance of any degree of knowledge. The inspired historian's account of the events which immediately followed is still more concise, and as a necessary consequence, still more obscure. He informs us, indeed, that the "Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden," into which he introduced the man and woman whom he had made, granting to them at the same time a very memorable dispensation; but when this was done, whether soon after their creation, or at a period comparatively remote, we are not informed. No attentive reader of the Book of Genesis can however doubt, that the garden was not planted, nor the human pair introduced into it, immediately on their awakening out of a state of unconsciousness. The double grant of food:—first, that which extends over "every herb bearing seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed," without any reservation whatever; next that which, whilst it allows them to eat of

“every tree of the garden,” arbitrarily restricts them from the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, distinctly proves, that Adam and Eve had lived previously to the enactment of what has been termed the paradisaical covenant, at least sufficiently long to stand in need of food. Without presuming to determine, as Warburton has somewhat rashly done, the exact extent of their early sojourn in the world at large, we shall continue our history, so as to embrace the fortunes of the first pair in what may be termed both conditions of their being:—their natural condition outside the garden of Eden; their supernatural condition as inhabitants of that delightful region.

It has been surmised by some of our ablest divines, that Almighty God, though he all along intended man to enjoy the inestimable gift of immortality, nevertheless kept him in what may be termed his natural state, for some time more or less extended after his creation. Whilst thus passing their days, the human pair are supposed to have heard nothing either of life or death; but, possessing and enjoying the boon of vitality, to have supported themselves as their Creator directed, in common with the brutes, upon the herbs and fruits which grew around them. During this interval it is further presumed, that they were instructed by God in the duties of natural religion; taught how to address him in prayer, and habituated to the observance of the Sabbath; till God, having sufficiently prepared them for the higher state which awaited them in Paradise, planted that garden into which he led them. It was now that prospects brighter and more glorious than are the natural right of any created being, shone out before the admiring eyes of our first parents. God having, we may presume, as a preliminary step, made them aware of the mingled nobility and lowliness of their origin; its nobility, in their spiritual part, which came direct from himself; its humility, in their bodies, which were the

children of dust; and having convinced them of the absolute dependence of all creatures, spiritual as well as corporeal, upon the sustaining power of him who created them, promised, should they prove themselves not unworthy of so much goodness, to bestow upon them the inestimable gift of immortality.

This was indeed a boon to which they could by natural right advance no claim; since no mathematical demonstration is more self-evident than that every thing which had a beginning must have an end, unless continually supported by the power which called it into existence; and we may well believe that it was accepted with the overflowing gratitude which it was calculated to excite. But the gift, though freely offered, because it might, without the shadow of injustice, have been altogether withheld, was offered only upon a certain condition. God, in order to convince the first pair that to immortality they possessed no claim whatever in themselves, suspended it upon the observance of a particular precept, which, though strictly enjoined, and admitting of no compromise, was not, we may believe, very hard to be obeyed. "The Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden, to dress it, and to keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Thus was man, by the free and unfettered bounty of his Creator, not only called into existence, but rendered the heir of immortality;—though it rested with himself, either to obtain the promised inheritance by obedience, or to forfeit it by a contrary line of conduct.

Of the site and situation of the garden into which the first pair were thus introduced, it is no easy matter to speak with accuracy. Many ingenious surmises have indeed been advanced, the most plausible of

which seems to place it in the province of Babylonia; but even of this there is no absolute certainty, in consequence of the introduction into the Mosaic account of the names of rivers which now, at least, are unknown.* Be the position of the garden, however, where it may, it is enough for us to be assured, that it actually existed, and that it was made the scene of the great trial, so to speak, of our first parents. A few words touching the disposition and contents of this happy abode may not be out of place.

Paradise, or the Garden of Eden, appears to have been stocked with every thing calculated to delight the senses and gratify the imagination. A noble river entering by two branches, and again departing by as many, swept through it. Nor was any thing wanting which the taste of creatures pure, spotless, and uncontaminated, like our first parents, could possibly require. But the most remarkable objects in this fair abode were two trees, of one of which we have already spoken, namely, "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil;" the other probably planted near it, and called the tree of life. These stood, we are told, in the middle of the garden; from which it is fair to conclude, that they occupied a conspicuous place in it, and with them the most momentous transaction in human history is intimately associated.

Of the uses of the tree of life, so little is said in Holy Writ, that it were vain to hazard more than a conjecture respecting it. Perhaps it was reared by God as a standing memorial of his goodness towards his human creatures, who might receive directions to eat sacramentally of its fruit, as Christians now eat sacramentally of the bread and wine at the Lord's table; or there might be in the fruit itself some strong medicinal property, capable of healing or preventing disease, and

* The reader who is curious on this head, is recommended to consult Carver's learned Discourse of the Terrestrial Paradise, with Patrick's Commentary on the twentieth chapter of Genesis.

prolonging life. Be this as it may, of the purposes for which the other tree was planted, no room is left for doubt. Its fruit, "fair to the eye," was made the test of man's obedience. As long as he should abstain from tasting it, so long would his right to immortality endure; no sooner should he pluck and eat, than that right would expire.

In this state, surrounded by every thing of which they could reasonably stand in need, the first pair dwelt for some time. God, in the mean while, was their director and friend. Appearing, it may be, in the same form with which he shall hereafter appear to judge the world, he conversed with them familiarly; he instructed them in every art necessary for their prosperity; made them acquainted with their duty towards him and towards each other, and trained them, as a father trains his children, for the still higher state to which they were destined. On their parts, again, perfect happiness prevailed. Subject to no rebellious or unruly passions, docile, submissive, pious, and grateful, their life was one continued succession of such delights as are now unknown except in heaven. Had they but retained their innocence, children would have been born to them in due time, all of whom would have enjoyed the same advantages as themselves; and when mankind became too numerous—as in the course of years they must—for the narrow compass of paradise on earth, generation after generation, as each was prepared for it, would have been translated into the abodes of the blessed. But our first parents, though pure and innocent, were, as all created beings are, from the first, imperfect. There were in them, even in Paradise, seeds of frailty not less than seeds of holier disposition, and these, in spite of all the opposing influence of God's spirit directly bestowed, but not improved, came, unhappily, too soon to maturity.

We learn from various passages in Scripture, that,

long prior to the creation of man, certain of the spirits which surrounded God's throne rebelled against him, and were driven in punishment of their crime, from the courts of heaven. The chief of these, spoken of indifferently as Lucifer, Satan, Beelzebub, and Apollyon, seems, for wise purposes, to have been permitted at this time to escape from his prison-house; and beholding the happy condition of the human pair, his envious and malignant heart began instantly to devise their ruin. For this purpose, he clothed himself in the form of a serpent, which, though to us an object of involuntary disgust, was in Paradise no less familiar with man than other animals; and throwing himself in the way of the woman, whom he judged to be the weaker of the two, he began to urge upon her the propriety of violating God's injunction. Whether he was previously aware of the particular prohibition which God had laid upon our first parents, or whether he artfully extorted that knowledge from Eve in the course of conversation, we cannot tell; but we find him represented in the sacred page as reasoning vehemently on the folly of paying to such a prohibition the smallest regard. He denied that death would or could be the consequence of eating the forbidden fruit. On the contrary, "God doth know," continued he, "that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened; and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil;" why then voluntarily turn away from that which is so desirable? The arguments of the wicked one, aided as they were by her own desires, proved too much for the constancy of Eve. "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eye, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof and did eat; and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat." Thus fell man from his state of primitive innocence; and thus were all the benefits assured by the paradisaical covenant, justly forfeited.

The immediate consequence of this rash act was certainly such as the tempter had predicted. The guilty pair acquired an increase of knowledge, by feeling that they had done wrong, and that they no longer merited the favour of their Maker; whilst shame, that inseparable companion of guilt, became from henceforth their portion. For the first time since their creation, they saw that they were naked; and they hastened to remove what a feeling of false delicacy pronounced to be a misfortune, by such means as lay within their reach. For this purpose, it is related in our English version, that "they sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves aprons"—an expression which, like several others in the sacred volume, has supplied the scoffer with food for indecent mirth: but here, as elsewhere, the scholar is at no loss to discern, that for merriment there is no scope. The relation of Moses amounts simply to this, that Adam and Eve platted or entwined together, not only the leaves, but the branches of the fig-tree, so as to form a sort of girdle round their waists, similar to the Roman crown; and surely there is nothing either ludicrous or improbable in the idea, that persons situated as they were would adopt such an expedient.

But shame, and a knowledge that they had done evil, were not the only consequents upon the primeval transgression. A new feeling, that of fear, was stirred up in the bosoms of the guilty pair; and they who had hitherto been accustomed, when they heard "the voice of the Lord" coming towards them, to welcome with joy his gracious visits, thought of these visits now with dismay. Their consciences set their sin before them in its blackest aspect; and as they had then no hope of a future Mediator, so there remained for them nothing but "a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation ready to devour them." The consequence was, that they no sooner heard the sound of God's majestic presence drawing nearer and nearer to

the spot where they stood, than they fled into the thickest and most tangled place of the garden; under the vain and unworthy hope of obtaining concealment from that eye to which "all places and things are continually open."

Out of their dark retreat, God immediately called them; and a scene ensued in perfect accordance with what daily meets our eyes when criminals are detected in the commission of a crime. Not daring to deny their guilt, the fallen pair proceeded to cast the blame, the man upon the woman, the woman upon the serpent; whilst their Judge, in language at once solemn and impressive, passed upon all three the sentence which they deserved. The Devil having made the serpent the instrument of his deception, God first of all pronounced upon it a decree, which doomed it henceforth to become the most loathsome and degraded of terrestrial animals.* But it was not upon the instrument only that God passed sentence. In the memorable declaration, that there should be enmity between the seed of the serpent and that of the woman, that the latter should crush the head of the former, as the former should bruise the heel of the latter, is implied the gracious promise of a Redeemer; who, descended from the woman, should by his own personal sufferings destroy the power of Satan, and restore to mankind all that they had lost by the transgression of their first parents. This, which we cannot doubt was, in due time, made intelligible to the culprits themselves, could not fail of proving in the highest degree consolatory to Adam and Eve, on whom the Creator next proceeded to pronounce judgment. Unto the woman he said, "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children, and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." And unto Adam he said, "Because

* "Dust shalt thou eat," is merely a figurative expression for grovelling. See Micah vii. 7. Psalm lxxii.

thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it; cursed is the ground for thysake: in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

Such is the account given by Moses of the fall of our first parents, and of the tremendous consequences to which it gave rise. Instead of pure and spotless beings basking as it were, in the smiles of a beneficent Creator, they were become miserable culprits, trembling under the frowns of their Judge, whilst the immortality which had once been placed within their reach, and conditionally assured to them, was withdrawn. Death, in the most absolute sense of the term, was now their portion, though whether to be inflicted immediately, or suspended for a season, they possessed no means of ascertaining. But it was not of immortality alone that the great primeval transgression deprived mankind. The direct and continued tuition by God's Holy Spirit, which had hitherto guided them, and which to creatures circumstanced as they were, seems to have been absolutely indispensable, ceased to be afforded, and their moral no less than their physical nature suffered a grievous deterioration. They were left, to a certain extent at least, to the direction of that imperfect reason which they had already preferred to the instructions of the Most High; and the seeds of vice and error were in consequence not slow in growing up into plants, and bringing forth ample fruit.

We are not unaware that this simple narrative of events has been frequently so interpreted, as to encumber it with difficulties and contradictions to which it is not in itself liable. Though it falls not in with

the plan of our present work to enter much at length into the discussion of abstract points of doctrine; still, as the right understanding of the whole Christian scheme depends entirely upon the opinions entertained touching the transactions just related, we consider it necessary, before proceeding further with our history, to offer a few remarks with the view of placing this subject in its true light.

It appears to us, that one of the chief obstacles to a right understanding of the sentence passed upon our guilty first parents by their Maker, consists in the erroneous opinions which are generally held respecting the nature of the human soul. Because that viewless essence is immaterial, and therefore uncompounded, it has not unfrequently been held, that it is naturally immortal; in other words, that an exertion of power equal to that which was required to call the human soul into being, would be necessary in order to cause its annihilation. But they who argue thus forget that the soul, or living principle, in every animated creature is, equally with the soul or living principle in man, immaterial. If, therefore, immortality be a necessary accompaniment of immateriality, then are the souls of the brute creation immortal as our own—a supposition for which no professed Christian is likely to contend, and which the very Deist would reject with disdain.

The truth, however, is—and both reason and revelation bear us out in the assertion—that immortality, simple and essential immortality, belongs to one Being only, namely, to God. “He alone,” says St. Paul, “hath,” that is, hath inherent in himself, “immortality;” and though other beings shall also endure for ever, and the human soul shall, we are assured, be of the number, both it and they must ever owe their continued existence to his supporting hand. An act of volition on the part of the Most High, first called them into being; a continued act of volition on his

part supports them there, and it requires but a cessation of that act, if we may so express ourselves, in order to return them all to the nothingness from which they originally came. It is therefore a grievous error to perplex ourselves as to the probable state of the human soul, had God's sentence been carried fully into execution, without the intervention of any propitiatory Mediator. In this case, when the whole machine, the soul and the body of each man, had served its destined purpose, the latter would have been resolved into its elements or constituent parts, whilst the former, separated from the organs or implements by which it works, would have ceased to exist. But it suited not the goodness of the Creator to deal thus with his creature, whom he had once blessed with a vision of immortality. The same address which condemned Adam to return into dust, gave assurance that a Deliverer would arise to restore to him, and to all his descendants, the free gift just forfeited; and as with God "one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day," the effects of the great sacrifice on the cross were instantly felt.

With respect again to the moral consequences of the first transgression, both upon the culprits themselves, and upon their descendants, they were neither less serious nor less certain than its physical consequences. The innocence which had hitherto covered them as with a robe of light, was no more, and inflamed passions, with reasoning powers weakened and deformed, rendered both them and their children prone to evil. Whether this arose from some poisonous ingredient in the fruit itself, or was the mere offspring of that great law of mental association to which all living things are more or less obedient, the results were precisely the same. Man ceased, from that hour, to be the upright and innocent creature which he once was; and his offspring, to the latest posterity, are very far gone from original righteousness.

It is much to be regretted, that with a view of the case so intelligible as this, the metaphysical subtleties of the schoolmen should have mixed up questions which have with revealed truth no connexion. Among the number of these, we have no hesitation in classing one which has produced many controversies in the Church of Christ—we mean the inquiry, how far we partake in the guilt of our first parents:—in other words, how far it is or is not possible that guilt, and a proneness to guilt, should descend by inheritance. No sane person will now, it is presumed, contend that *we* are any where in Scripture called upon to repent of the sin of Adam, or that, in the proper sense of the term guilt, we are at all chargeable with it; but that we reap the fruits of the first act of rebellion, both in our physical and moral natures, is undeniable. To the commission of that crime may be traced back, as to the fountain-head, the diseases, the misery, and the temporal death to which we are liable; whilst of his own innate tendency to indulge his passions, at the expense of probity and right reason, there is no man whose personal experience fails to convince him. No doubt, the death of the Redeemer has more than counterbalanced these evils. The free gift of immortality, as regained by him, is now ensured to the whole human race beyond the possibility of forfeiture, whilst the means of attaining to an immortality of happiness lie equally within the reach of all. But that the original taint, as it has somewhat unfortunately been termed, still remains, no man who examines the workings of his own heart will deny, and we are without ground for imagining that it will cease to operate till the consummation of all things.

We cannot close this chapter without a few remarks, in reply to certain popular objections which have been occasionally brought against the entire history. Without pausing to particularize these, it may suffice to state, that they resolve themselves into a de-

cision, that the transactions recorded in the second chapter of Genesis, are to be taken not as realities, but as an allegory. Thus, the man is to be regarded as emblematical of reason, the woman of sense, and the talking serpent of concupiscence; and hence the whole history denotes nothing more than the defection of the soul from God. We need scarcely observe, that whoever believes this to be the case, can have no steady or fixed belief in any part of Scripture, which throughout treats this narrative as a detail of facts; and least of all can the doctrine of the atonement be admitted by the advocates of so strange a theory. If the fall be merely an allegorical fall, the recovery must be allegorical also, and the whole Gospel resolves itself into a tedious and even mischievous allegory.

Philosophers have, we believe, been led into these absurdities by the notion, that the narrative of Moses records events equally unworthy both of God and man. The temptation of an apple in particular, has been held up to unrestrained ridicule, as well as the account of the serpent's conversation with the woman; whilst the punishment is pronounced to be out of all proportion too severe, for an offence in itself so trivial.

In answer to the observations touching the suspension of so inestimable a benefit, upon the eating or not eating of a particular fruit, we beg to observe, that, circumstanced as our first parents are represented to have been, it appears very difficult to devise any other, not to say any more appropriate, test of their faith and obedience. Of no moral crime, in the ordinary meaning of the term, could they be guilty. With the whole world for their possession, they could neither steal, nor covet, nor defraud; without another man or woman in existence, they could not commit adultery; for deceit or falsehood there was no room; to blasphemy they, to whom the glory of Almighty God was daily made manifest, could not well give utterance; how then could they be tried, except by the establish-

ment of some arbitrary test? and what test so natural, as that of some fruit, tempting to the eye, and doubtless of singular fragrance? The objection, therefore, if made at all, must not stop where it does. It must go on, and condemn all trial, because none besides that which actually occurred can be conceived. Now this, so far from diminishing, would only increase our perplexities a thousand-fold:—is it not therefore wiser and better to receive the declarations of Holy Writ literally, as they are made? The talking serpent is, without doubt, an extraordinary occurrence, view it how we may; but let us not therefore treat it as a fiction. It is at least not more surprising than the raising of the dead, of which no professed Christian doubts; whilst it may, after all, involve no such contradiction as has at first sight been supposed. Let it be borne in mind that the whole transaction is represented by the inspired historian, as something quite distinct from the ordinary occurrences of nature. A spirit possessed of great power is stated to have been the immediate agent—the serpent is said to have been the instrument, and nothing more than the instrument, by which that spirit acted. Now until we can explain with accuracy how it comes about, that spirit operates upon matter at all, it is not for us to declare, that this particular mode of operation was, or is impossible; whilst its very contradiction to the dictates of her own experience may be supposed to have had its full weight in leading the woman into the commission of the crime against which she had been warned. If, as Milton represents him to have done, the tempter urged as a reason why she should eat of the fruit, that its juice had endowed him, an animal naturally dumb, with the faculty of speech; can we conceive any argument more weighty with one already more than half-disposed to seek for knowledge at all hazards? Be this, however, as it may, we see nothing in the record itself, calculated to excite the reasonable distrust of any re-

flecting person. It holds its place in a volume confessedly and avowedly declarative of events out of the pale of ordinary calculation; and if that volume can be proved to be authentic, there seems to be no more reason for rejecting this, than other narratives to the full as extraordinary.

Lastly, in answer to such as contend, that the punishment awarded was wholly disproportionate to the degree of guilt incurred, it is sufficient to observe, that the punishment was simply a return on the part of man, to a state of nature, whilst the offence was as rank and flagrant an act of rebellion as ever was committed. A man is no less a thief who steals all that he can, provided that all be one shilling, than is his neighbour who steals all that comes within his reach, because it chances to be a bag of diamonds. Adam was as much disobedient to the will of God, in eating the forbidden fruit, as Aaron was disobedient, when he framed and worshipped the golden calf.

Finally, it is absurd to demand, why did God expose man to such a trial, knowing, as he unquestionably did, that man would fall? He who goes on asking such questions can never be fully satisfied, because, while we see through a glass darkly, it is in vain to expect that we shall obtain a satisfactory insight into God's designs in creating at all; but thus much we may observe, that if God foresaw how the trial would end, as he undeniably did, he likewise provided a more than adequate remedy for the evil. Moreover, God having created man a free and responsible agent, it was right that an opportunity of exercising that freedom should be afforded; and though the issue was calamitous in no ordinary degree, it may be more than doubted whether man would have been so happy as he is, had no such opportunity of erring occurred. Freedom of will is necessarily allied to a liability to err; and the former being as essential to happiness as to responsibility, it was better that it

should be ours, fraught with danger as it is, than that we should fill the place of mere machines in God's universe. But above all, when we consider *how* God interfered to heal the wound which Adam's frailty inflicted, we shall not, it is presumed, cast a shadow of reproach upon our most beneficent Creator: it is enough for us to know, that if God permitted Adam, in the exercise of his free will, to fall, and to incur for himself and his posterity the sad calamity of death, he also, by the sacrifice of his own beloved Son, has more than restored to us the station which our great ancestor once filled in Paradise.

CHAPTER III.

Offspring of our first Parents.—Death of Abel.—Descendants of Cain and Seth.—Gradual peopling of the earth.—Noah and his family.—The Deluge.—Objections stated and answered.

A. M. 100 to A. M. 2257.—B. C. 5311 to 3154.

It has been shown that, previous to passing upon Adam the awful sentence of death, God cursed the earth with barrenness for his sake, and, to fulfil this curse, he caused a change greatly for the worse to take place in the temperature of the atmosphere. This was done not in anger, but in pity—not through any exuberance of wrath, such as frequently prompts us to heap execrations upon things inanimate, but that Adam, now rendered mortal, might have the less cause to regret that his sojourn in this world was not to be for everlasting. That men's affections for earth and earthly things become light, and easily withdrawn, in proportion as their lives make up a continued series of privations, the experience of every day proves; and as death is necessarily far more terrible in anticipation than in reality, God only acted with his accustomed goodness, when he caused the future career of our first father to partake at least as much of privation as of enjoyment. But though condemned to inhabit a world from which his subsistence was henceforth to be extracted only by the sweat of his brow, man was not entirely deserted by his Maker, or left to discover, through the efforts of

his own genius, every means for the alleviation of his sorrows. Almighty God having vouchsafed to him the religious institution of sacrifice, as a type of that great act which should in aftertimes make good his losses, taught him to form from the skins of the animals slaughtered, clothes adapted to his wants; and, though the fact is not expressly mentioned by Moses, instructed him, we may well believe, in the rudiments, at least, of agriculture, and other useful sciences.

But though thus gracious and longsuffering, it would have accorded neither with his own designs, nor yet with the new condition into which man had passed, had God permitted him to continue, changed as he was, an inmate of the garden of Eden. With the commission of the fatal offence, man's claim to possess so fair an abode ceased; and as it would have tended in no degree to advance his happiness had his sojourn there been protracted, the Almighty determined to remove him at once. For this purpose, an Angel was directed to drive him forth from Paradise, "to till the ground from whence he was taken:" in other words, Adam was dismissed from his lovely dwelling in Eden, and rendered once more a denizen of that particular district where, previous to his admission into the paradisaical covenant, he had dwelt.

The oriental writers who have touched upon this subject, unite in representing the sorrow and repentance of our first parents, as deep and lasting. Of this, we conceive there can be little doubt; whilst their future history distinctly proves, that to their entreaties for pardon, God did not turn a deaf ear. On the contrary, he cheered them with the prospect of their future Deliverer; still granted them the shechinah, or visible glory, to direct them, and still held with them from time to time conversations from the midst of that fiery pillar. It is true, that the intercourse between God and man was now very different,

both in its nature and effects, from that which had prevailed during the period of man's innocence; yet was it consolatory in the highest degree to the poor criminals to know, that they were not utterly forsaken; and hence they set about the task of subduing the stubborn earth, if not in absolute joy, at all events with resignation and pious gratitude.

They had not long returned to their original abode when Eve produced a son, whom, because she fondly flattered herself that he was the promised Redeemer, she called Cain. The word signifies a possession; and the extravagance of her joy, when, as she herself expresses it, "she had gotten *the* man from the Lord," clearly demonstrates that such were her ill-founded expectations. By and by, she bore another son, whom his parents called Abel, a word interpreted by some to mean "sorrow," by others, "vanity;" but, according to either explanation, sufficiently indicative of the frame of mind in which it was given. If "sorrow" be the right interpretation, then, no doubt, the name refers to the grief of the child's parents, either because of their fallen state, or because they had discovered, that their hopes concerning Cain were groundless; if "vanity," then was it intended to denote that they held him in small repute in comparison with his brother, or that they knew their expectations concerning that brother to be in reality without foundation. The question is not, however, of sufficient importance to be enlarged upon here: however the phrase may be resolved, it will not materially affect the import of Holy Writ.

It has been supposed by most divines, ancient as well as modern, that, though Moses makes no mention of the fact, each birth, at the beginning of many generations, was of twins. This is the more probable, because such a provision seems necessary in the infancy of the world, and it receives sufficient confirmation from the statement afterwards advanced,

that "Adam begat sons and daughters." Be this, however, as it may, our history is for a time confined principally to the proceedings of Adam's two elder sons, Cain and Abel.

We are told by the inspired author of the Pentateuch, that, as the young men grew up, they not only turned their attention to different pursuits, but exhibited a striking contrariety of disposition and temper. Cain became a cultivator of the ground, for which his muscular form probably adapted him; whilst Abel, a more gentle and delicate specimen of human nature, devoted his time to the tending of flocks. In like manner, Cain appears from the first to have been haughty, arrogant, and rebellious; Abel, docile, humble, and pious. And this diversity of temperament has been accounted for, we think with great show of reason, on the following principles: Cain, educated by his doting parents in the idea that he was the promised seed, grew up with exaggerated ideas of his own importance; and when the truth came to be revealed to him, wounded pride, instead of giving place to such feelings as became him, rankled in his heart, and drove him into impiety. Abel, on the other hand, of whom no such ridiculous expectation had been formed, was taught from his childhood to fear God, and to respect his parents and his brother—by which means, his disposition became pliable and meek, and his piety increased with his years.

It was customary, even in the infancy of the world to offer oblations to God, by way of acknowledgment of his bountiful supply of all creatures necessary to sustain life; and the spot where such offerings were made in the family of Adam, is supposed to have been that, near which the Shechinah, or visible glory of God, was displayed. In obedience to this custom, both Cain and Abel were in the habit of carrying thither their gifts, Abel, as a shepherd, the firstlings of his flock; Cain, as a husbandman, the firstfruits

of the soil. These offerings were presented with the different feelings which actuated the two men : Cain's, as it were, in defiance ; Abel's, in lowliness of heart ; and God, as the Bible expresses it, " had respect unto Abel and his offering, but unto Cain and his offering, he had not respect." How this was shown, whether by a movement of the fiery pillar, or by a voice from the midst of the blaze, we cannot tell ; but this much we know, that the fact was placed beyond the reach of doubt, and that it produced something like remonstrance, or angry expostulation, between Cain and his Maker. But it led to no change of heart, on the part of the former. On the contrary, Cain, irritated beyond endurance that Abel, whom he despised, should be more favoured of Heaven than himself, led his unoffending relative forth from the settlement ; " and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against his brother and slew him."

Such was the first fatal effect of Adam's transgression : the death which had been threatened was now before his eyes, in the most horrible of all shapes, for he saw one and the most excellent of his sons slain by the hand of the other.

The murder of Abel was not permitted to pass unnoticed by God. He called to the assassin from the midst of the pillar of fire, " Where is Abel thy brother ?" and when the ruthless murderer professed to be ignorant of his victim's fate, the same awful voice assured him, that " Abel's blood had cried to God from the earth." A terrible punishment was then imposed upon Cain. His life indeed, as necessary to the great purposes of creation, was spared, but he was driven forth from the presence of the Shechinah, and doomed to be a wanderer and a vagabond, hated by all men, and hating all upon the face of the earth. Nor did the matter rest here. In order that none of his brethren might lift up an avenging hand against

him, God placed a mark upon Cain, either by blasting his countenance with lightning, or causing a palsy to affect his head ; so that when men beheld him, they at once perceived that he was a homicide, kept alive as an example of God's abhorrence of that hideous crime. Thus was Cain expelled from the infant settlement, where God's glory still shone ; and going with his wife into a remote district, he there laid the foundation of a numerous, and, as the event proved, of a very impious colony.

That the descendants of Cain could hardly fail of growing up in habits of excess, and probably of idolatry, the following reasoning will suffice, we presume, to satisfy every candid inquirer : in the days of Cain and Abel, mankind at large stood towards their Creator in the predicament of children towards their earthly parent. Destitute of experience, and ignorant of many arts, they could look only to him for direction in their ways ; and so incapable do they appear to have been of comprehending the idea of a God every where present, yet Himself invisible, that the Almighty vouchsafed to them his Shechinah, or sensible glory, as a sort of oracle to be consulted as often as necessity required. As long as they all enjoyed free access to that shrine, and all met together for the purpose of worship, it was scarcely possible for any portion of them to misapprehend their duty, or forget their Maker ; but when Cain and his family withdrew to a distant region, where no such privilege was afforded, their progress towards debasement would be both palpable and rapid. Having no Shechinah to consult, it is at least probable, that they would substitute in its room some resplendent creature ; the sun perhaps, or the moon, or, it might be, the element of fire ; and finding that this new image of the Deity paid no regard to their prayers, they would soon cease to think of God otherwise than as their implacable enemy. Then would follow a sort of persuasion, arising out of the extreme

longevity of their fathers, that God had threatened more than he was able to perform; and that though he had expelled them from Paradise, it nevertheless exceeded his ability to deprive them of life without the intervention of one of themselves. This, we conceive, is by no means impossible, whilst the necessity imposed upon them of drawing their subsistence from a soil either barren in itself, or overgrown with rank and useless vegetation, would lead then, as it leads now, to a growing neglect of the duty of devotion. Thus would they fall off in virtue and religion every day; passion would obtain over them undivided control; and power and might would take place among them of natural right and moral obligation. That they became luxurious as well as violent in their conduct, seems also to be broadly hinted by Moses, who, in enumerating the inventions to which they laid claim, particularly specifies musical instruments, and the art of working in metals; by which an inference has, we think, not inaptly been drawn, that as Jubal was the deviser of the harp and organ, so was Tubal Cain the inventor of warlike instruments.

In the mean while, Eve had borne to Adam many children, of whom one only, as being the stock from which Noah sprang, is introduced by name into the sacred chronicle. The individual in question was Seth, who exhibiting proofs of the same holy and pious disposition which had distinguished the murdered Abel, is said to have been granted to our first parents as a compensation for their lost son. This Seth, we read, became the head of a numerous tribe, between whom and the descendants of Cain a feeling of estrangement long subsisted—indeed, the latter appear to have lived during many generations in continual dread, that the former would avenge upon them the murder of Abel. Of the descent of these tribes Moses gives a brief outline, particularizing all those of the elder line, till he brings us down to the epoch

when Lamech, the seventh from Cain, by his sagacious counsels, overcame the animosity which had hitherto prevailed between the families. In like manner, the progeny of Seth is followed through nine generations till we arrive at Noah the son of Methuselah; but of the actions of these personages it is needless to attempt any minute history, inasmuch as the information concerning them, if gathered at all, must be gathered from very apocryphal sources. Let it suffice to state, that so long as the children of Cain lived apart from those of Seth, one portion of mankind retained a knowledge of God, and a reverence for his holy laws; but that the door of separation was no sooner broken down, than bad example began to produce its usual effects. "The sons of God," as Seth's descendants are called, no sooner saw "the daughters of men," that is, the females of the tribe of Cain, and began to intermarry with them, than they were gradually withdrawn from the upright path in which they had hitherto walked; and impiety and vice, gaining the ascendancy, overspread the world like a pestilence.

At what precise period these unfortunate unions began to take place, we have no authority for stating. It appears probable, indeed, that as long as Adam lived, the descendants of Seth would shun the children of his polluted brother; and there is a tradition among the Jewish rabbins, that even on his deathbed our first great father enjoined upon those about him, that no closer connexion should be formed. The same rabbins inform us that Seth's tribe dwelt frugally and innocently in the mountains, while the Cainites lived loose and disorderly lives in the plains below, and they minutely describe the manner in which the former were gradually drawn into similar courses with their profligate neighbours. But on these heads we are forced to admit that conjecture, by whomsoever hazarded, is but an insecure guide, and that he acts the more prudent part who is content to pry no deeper than

Scripture authorizes. What is told us there amounts simply to this, that the reconciliation of the two tribes, like the opening of a flood-gate, let loose violence and crime upon the earth—and if we believe this, we believe sufficient for all reasonable purposes.

It was now that God, compelled by the profaneness of his creatures to withdraw, as it were, his visible presence from among them, began to exhort them, through the medium of preachers of righteousness, to repent. Of these there was one, by name Enoch, whose zeal was so highly approved, that, partly as a reward to himself, partly as a testimony to others, that God was not unmindful of their actions, the Almighty removed him without tasting death, from this world to a better; but neither Enoch's preaching, nor the threats of condign punishment from time to time published, produced any effect upon the polluted race of men. The giants, as men of violence and rapine were termed, set such rebukes at defiance; whilst others more indolently, but not less grossly guilty, turned them into ridicule. By this time, Adam, Seth, and all who knew either by personal experience or immediate intercourse with the actors, how God had dealt with men in the beginning of time, had paid the debt of nature. Though their ages were protracted, as indeed the condition of the infant world required, many centuries, death would not ultimately be cheated of his due, and hence they returned, one after another, to the dust from whence they were taken. It was then "that God looked upon the earth, and behold it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth;" and "repenting that he had made man," he determined, since the voice of remonstrance would not be heard, to raise the arm of vengeance.

There existed in those days a good and pious person named Noah, the great-grandson of Enoch, whom the Almighty had visibly translated into heaven. As it had been discovered to Enoch, at the birth of Me-

thuselah, that soon after the death of that child, the whole race of mankind would be destroyed for their wickedness, so it was revealed to Lamech, at the birth of Noah, that he and his family should be preserved from the common ruin. For this reason, Lamech gave to his son the name of Noah, a word which by interpretation signifies a comforter—and the child grew up in all the virtue and godliness of his ancestors, and as a necessary consequence, in the favour of his Maker.

Noah had attained to the age of five hundred years, and there were born to him three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth; when Almighty God, wearied out with the continued impiety of mankind, resolved to make one last effort to reclaim them. For this purpose, Noah was commissioned solemnly to declare, that unless within the space of one hundred and twenty years a great reformation took place, He who had created would destroy mankind; and that he would do so by overwhelming the whole compass of the habitable globe with a flood of waters. To impress them more fully with the certainty of the threatened judgment, Noah, whom God had determined to save alive, received directions to construct an ark, or large vessel, for his own preservation, and to do so with as much display as might be necessary for the purpose of attracting general notice. The patriarch accordingly began his task openly and in the sight of all men. He assured them from day to day, that what he did was done by divine command, and that the object of his labour was to preserve himself and his family from the ruin which hung over the world. But his voice was to them as the voice of one who mocked, and they treated both him and his occupation with contempt. Thus was suffered to pass by the latest hour of trial vouchsafed to the rebellious antediluvians, and the ark, with all its rooms and stalls, being completed, and stored with such grain and provision as

the circumstances of the case required, it now only remained to be seen, whether Noah had spoken of himself, or whether God had sent him.

The limited period of 120 years having expired, God commanded Noah to collect together the several members of his family, his wife, his sons, and his sons' wives, and to withdraw into the ark which he had constructed. Thither also God caused to repair a certain number of animals of every species, of beasts, of cattle, and of creeping things, of which seven males and as many females of some kinds, one male and one female of others, were received into places fitted up for them. That these were miraculously guided to their destined place of shelter cannot be doubted, because nothing short of a miracle will account for the fact; but the whole transaction, from beginning to end, being miraculous, there is no room in this either for disbelief or misgiving. Thus was the last arrangement made. Noah, with the germs of new races, entered into the ark, somewhere about the middle of September, the patriarch himself being then about six hundred years old, and the door being shut by God himself, so that it might be impervious to water, Divine mercy ceased to strive any longer with Divine justice.

The favoured few had inhabited their narrow home but seven days, when the heavens became overcast with black clouds; and rain, such as had never been witnessed before, and never has been witnessed since, began to fall. The windows of heaven, says the sacred historian, were opened; by which is meant, that the thin waters which continually float in the atmosphere fell, not as they usually fall in detached showers, but in a mass over one devoted spot; whilst, at the same time, the earth itself being thrown from its equilibrium, the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and whole oceans, with all the lakes and

ivers which feed them, burst forth from their beds. Onwards the flood rolled, rushing from south to north with an impetuosity which nothing could oppose, and pouring so dense a body of water over the earth, as to sweep many feet above the summits of the highest mountains. Too late now did guilty man discover that he had rebelled against a God able and willing, not only to expostulate, but to punish. Our imaginations can hardly conceive the horror of the devoted race, as the deluge rose higher and higher upon them; how they would flee, first to the swelling grounds, then to the hills, and lastly to the mountains; whilst their despair, as the foaming torrent still gained upon their new retreats, presents a picture to the mind, which the most seared in heart and feeling cannot endure to contemplate. All their cries and struggles availed not; and they perished, with every terrestrial being that breathed the air of heaven.

For forty days and forty nights together, without a moment's intermission, the rain continued to fall, when at length the ark began to float, and to move from place to place, as the waters impelled it; and though there might be short cessations afterwards at certain intervals, yet the flood gradually increased, till, as has been already said, it stood upwards of twenty-two feet above the tops of the loftiest mountains. At this elevation the flood remained till the latter end of March, when "God remembered Noah and every living thing that was with him in the ark," with that kindness and mercy which ever belong to him. The overflowing of the water having served its uses, God determined to reduce it once more to its proper level; for which purpose, he caused a strong wind to sweep over the surface, at the same time that he stopped up the windows of heaven, and "the rain from heaven was restrained." Then it was that the ark, which had drifted by the current northwards, grounded

on one of the highest ridges of Ararat, where it had lain not many days, when the tops of the neighbouring mountains began to appear.

The ark ceased to float, and the summits of the hills rose above the watery world in the beginning of May; but Noah, wisely considering that though the mountains were bare, the valleys must still be overflowed, determined to attempt no further discoveries for some time to come. In accordance with this plan, he permitted forty days to elapse ere he opened a window, and let a raven go; but though the instinct of the animal was calculated to lead it far away, wherever the smell of carrion might allure, Noah's experiment failed. The earth was not yet sufficiently dry, and the bird returned. Seven days after this, he let loose a pigeon, a bird of strong pinion, and peculiarly adapted to effect discoveries, on account of its fidelity to home, however remote; but the pigeon, like the raven, found "no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark." Another week now elapsed, at the end of which time he sent forth the dove, which cheered him, by returning in the evening with an olive-branch in its mouth, by which he obtained the comfortable assurance that the flood was rapidly abating. He accordingly delayed another week, at the end of which time he once more sent the pigeon forth, which finding the earth dry, and its native element salubrious, returned to him no more. Assured by this that the violence of the flood was over, Noah "removed the covering of the ark; and he looked, and beheld the face of the ground was dry." This latter event occurred "in the second month, that is, in September, on the seven-and-twentieth day of the month," just one year and ten days from the period at which "the fountains of the great deep" began to be broken up.

Such is the account which Moses gives of a catastrophe, of which every nation, however rude, re-

tains some memorial, and by which the whole of the human race, with the exception of eight persons, was destroyed from the face of the earth. We need scarcely observe, that to it, as well as to the whole train of the antediluvian history, various objections have been taken; and we feel that we should very imperfectly accomplish our object, were we to pass them by unnoticed. Let us see to what they amount.

It has been said, that the Mosaic account of the primeval times, from the creation of man to the flood, places the character of the Creator in a point of view utterly at variance with all our notions of Divine justice, wisdom, and goodness. If God foresaw that man would in the course of a few generations become so desperately wicked, why did he create him at all? or, foreseeing this, and giving him the lordship over so fair a world, why was he so angry with him, as to destroy him entirely from the face of the earth? To have cut off the corrupt descendants of Cain by some signal calamity would have been both wise and just; and it would have been an act of mercy too, provided it were so done as to prove a warning to the Sethites—but, first of all, to permit the latter tribe to become contaminated by intermixture with the former, and then to involve both in one common ruin, is not such conduct as we might expect from an all-perfect Being. Finally, objections have been taken to the use of certain phrases, as that of the sons of God intermarrying with the daughters of men—and that there were giants in those days; whilst the translation of Enoch, and Noah's deluge, with the consequences arising out of it; these, as well as the extreme longevity of the antediluvians, have been pronounced fables fit only for the amusement of children or savages.

The man who avers, that since God foreknew how rapidly man would degenerate, he ought not to have created him at all, can be answered only by an affirmation as dogmatical as his own. God surely pos-

sessed the power to create, or not to create, according to his own pleasure; and as he did create in spite of that foreknowledge to which reference so unworthy is made, we may rest satisfied that there existed some wise and good reason for his so doing. Corrupt as the world has been, and corrupt as it continues to be, he must be a bold reasoner who will contend, that looking at it as a part of the great universe, it may not, upon the whole, be the source of more good than evil; and if the case be so, then is God's wisdom in creating it, with all its blots and blemishes, abundantly justified. But, without casting our eyes so far abroad, we may venture to assert, that, if looked to in itself merely, it exhibits many more proofs of the goodness than of the severity of the Creator, and, as a necessary consequence, is the theatre of a great deal more of happiness than of misery. This, however, though undeniably true, is not perhaps the proper ground on which to meet our adversary:—let us examine his difficulty as it deserves.

There cannot be a question, that God foreknew how man would act, long before he called him into being, exactly as he foreknows at this moment all events which shall occur in time. Such, at least, is the mode in which the poverty of human language compels us to speak; because, in strict justice there is no such thing as foreknowledge, the very idea of futurity implying the idea of uncertainty and obscurity. God being immortal, is not like finite creatures affected by time, considered as a succession of *moments*, or rather of *ideas*; and hence, that which we call *foreknowledge*, must be, and is with him, *knowledge*, positive and direct. But between knowing that an action is in progress, and decreeing that it shall take place, the difference is immense; and hence, God, though he knew how Adam and his descendants would act, can no more be said to have preordained their actions, than the individual who sees from his window one man

deprive another of life, can be said to have preordained that murder should be committed. God, as we have shown, created man a free agent; and because man at the beginning was necessarily devoid of experience, God took him in an especial manner under his own protection, promising to reward him in an extraordinary manner, provided he would retain his innocence. What more, is it conceivable, that God could do for a being, whom he had formed with a power to choose either good or evil? If it be again asked, why was this power of choice granted? we can only answer, because, without it, real happiness seems to be unattainable; and as God created purely for the sake of rendering his creatures happy, he gifted them, when formed, with absolute freedom of will. Had man chosen to observe the conditions on which eternal life was offered, and thus kept himself under the direct and immediate tuition of God, though we are hardly justified in believing that neither he nor his descendants would have violated any of the laws of nature, we may nevertheless rest satisfied, that into the by-paths of iniquity they never would have wandered very far. With God to guide them, no wrong associations could have been formed in their infant minds; and as their offences would have been doubtless visited with punishments at once prompt, and proportionate to their magnitude, they would have been reclaimed long before vice could have grown up into a habit. These privileges, however, Adam cast behind him, and as much of his guilt consisted in his choosing to be his own master in all things, it was not unbecoming in the Creator to leave him to reap the fruits of his own devices. Now, the consequences of this abandonment, it requires no great depth of penetration to discover. Man knew nothing by nature of a future state, and was as little capable, without God's assistance, of fitting himself for it, as an infant is capable, without education, of fitting itself for the highest offices in the state; and it is rather

a matter of legitimate surprise therefore that man did not degenerate more rapidly than that he degenerated at all. Nay, we may rest assured, that had God not interfered to prevent it, the degeneracy which is spoken of as occurring too quickly, would have occurred long before, inasmuch as man was yet a child in mind, though in the full maturity of his body, when he was sent forth into a world made sterile for his sake.

But God could not force his tuition on beings who arbitrarily rejected it. When Cain slew Abel, he placed himself in a position towards his Maker of daring hostility; and being deprived of God's counsels, he and his sons fell at once into impiety.

Again, it is sheer inanity to ask, why God permitted the righteous sons of Seth to form connexions with the impious daughters of Cain, and why, when these connexions were formed, the Sethites should have fallen into the gulf of crime. In this case, as in others, God would not interfere with that freedom of will which he had bestowed; whilst whoever consults the experience even of his own past life, must know that when vice and virtue come in close and intimate collision, vice is very rarely reclaimed, virtue almost always destroyed. That this is one of the fruits of that sin which lost our first parents Paradise, no divine has ever pretended to deny; and if it fail to prove that human nature, as it comes from the hand of God, is absolutely depraved, it undeniably demonstrates that, without divine help, we cannot but fall. If then God did all that could be done, compatible with the exercise of man's free-will; if God vouchsafed to be man's instructor after the fall itself; displayed his glory visibly before him, and from the Shechinah uttered lessons of morality; if he offered strong moral inducements to the practice of virtue, and strong denunciations against its opposite; is he to be reproached for man's corruption, let it spring whence it might?

With respect again to the destruction of the whole

antediluvian race, it appears to us that there was more of mercy than of harshness in that awful chastisement. Let it be borne in mind, that in the eyes of God, "a thousand years are but as a day, and a day as a thousand years." Let it be remembered also, that in all his dealings with men, he has looked not so much to the benefit of individuals, as to the attainment of the greatest aggregate sum of good : and it will be found, that in utterly destroying a single generation so depraved as that which perished by the waters of the Flood, he benefited all the generations which have since succeeded or shall succeed even to the end. There is but slender ground to suppose that men who had resisted the repeated attempts of the Almighty to reclaim them, ever would have repented had they been spared ; and as little is it probable that their descendants would have found out a new and better path wherein to walk. Was it not much better for the world at large to destroy one entire generation, and thus to cause the human race to spring once more from a stock comparatively pure ? As to the scruples of those who see marks of cruelty in the deaths of the inferior animals ; it is enough to observe, that as they could not be preserved from a general deluge, except by a miracle, it would have scarcely consisted with the good providence of God to work one in their behalf, more especially as their sufferings could not be either very lengthened or very severe, and because had they not perished, they would have been a great deal too numerous for the welfare of the new colony. On that head, therefore, we conceive that no difficulty exists.

We have already, in the course of the preceding pages, anticipated the quibble which arises out of the expressions put into the mouth of the doubter. We have shown, that by the phrase "the sons of God admiring the daughters of men, and taking wives from among them," no more is meant than that the descendants of Seth, called in consequence of their com-

parative righteousness God's sons, intermarried with the profligate daughters of Cain; whilst the word giant we have explained, as we are persuaded the truth requires, to signify men of rapine, robbers, and plunderers. If, however, there be those who believe that God, in punishment of the incestuous intercourse which is supposed to have been carried on in the world previous to the Flood, caused giants or monsters (for the Hebrew word bears both meanings), to be born, as we know of no law of nature which peremptorily contradicts this supposition, so we see no reason why it should be treated as childish. Men of overgrown stature have flourished in all ages, and there is no reason why they should not have been permitted to insult the human form more frequently in the antediluvian ages, than they have ever since done.

We come now to the most serious of all the objections started to the credibility of the portion of our history just recorded; namely, those which turn upon the stories of Enoch's translation, and the general Deluge from which Noah was preserved.

The translation of Enoch is, indeed so stated in the book of Genesis, as to leave it doubtful how the fact ought to be received. Moses says no more than that "Enoch walked with God and was not, for God took him." Several of the rabbins, accordingly contend that the expression implies nothing further than that Enoch being a good man, God, in mercy, caused him to die at an early age, and so removed him from all risk of pollution. St. Paul, however, has given so very different an interpretation to the passage, that we feel ourselves bound to regard it as referring to something widely at variance with a natural death, to express which, indeed, it does not appear that any such paraphrase was necessary. The apostle says, "By faith, Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testi-

mony, that he pleased God." On the authority, therefore, partly of the singular form of speech employed by the historian, but far more of the positive declaration of the inspired apostle, we believe that Enoch was actually removed alive from earth to some one of the mansions of his heavenly Father's house. as the prophet Elija was many ages after. The transaction no doubt is a wonderful one; and it is equally indisputable, that Enoch's mortal body must have put on the immortal, as the bodies of such as shall be alive must do at the last day, because we know, upon the surest of all testimony, "that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God;" but though very wonderful, and implying so great a change, it is not therefore impossible. Moreover, there was a reason for it, which even our short-sightedness is at no loss to discover.

Long before the era of Enoch's translation, Death had begun to perform his office, and men saw that the intervention of one of themselves was not necessary to destroy the vital spark with which they were endowed. As soon as this discovery was made, it is in the highest degree probable, that those who at first believed that they should never die, ran into an opposite extreme, by believing that temporal death was the final end of every living creature. This idea, not unnatural in savages, and in men very far removed from savagism, when deprived of the light of revelation, would be the more readily encouraged, as it gave a greater sanction to the indulgence of those iniquitous propensities, by which the antediluvians seem to have been beset. The creed of a man who entertains no belief in a future state, must necessarily end in this, that it is a wise thing to make the most of life whilst it lasts, without paying any regard to the laws of morality and honour.

It is not unworthy of the wisdom and goodness of God, to suppose that he would interfere to arrest the progress of opinions leading to results so mischievous.

This, however was not to be done by argument or asseveration merely, because men in the condition of the antediluvians, seldom pay to argument, however sound, much attention; an example, therefore, or positive proof must be given, that the futurity of which the preachers spoke, was not fabulous. For this purpose, Enoch's translation took place; and we go not further than fair analogy permits, when we suppose that the stupendous event occurred openly and in the sight of crowds.

We take it for granted, that the time has long gone by, when any one pretending to the character of a philosopher or man of science, would dream of objecting to the Mosaic account of the Deluge, on the ground of a difficulty in finding a sufficiency of water for the purpose. The power which first created must be allowed to be perfectly adequate to supply that deficiency, if not by means such as we are pleased to term natural, certainly by means beyond nature; indeed, geologists seem all to be now agreed in opinion, that the earth must have been at some period or another entirely covered with water. But it is objected to the Mosaic history, that the period of the Flood is too recent, and its alleged continuance too brief, to account for phenomena which are every where apparent; such as petrified bones and other substances referrible to a watery origin, which have been discovered near to the surface of the earth. The Mosaic history does not explain, it is said, how the bones of animals, which can now live only in tropical climates, or in regions bordering on the tropics, should be discovered in high latitudes; nor does it account for the fact, that whilst the fossil bones of animals, which exist not on the present earth, are every where found in great numbers, no fossil remains of human beings have any where been discovered; but above all, it accounts not for the great masses of chalk and limestone with which almost

every country abounds, and which modern philosophers contend were all formed by the decomposition of testaceous animals in water. Hence an inference is drawn, that this globe has been subjected to many great and violent convulsions long before the era of the Mosaic Deluge, and that it must have existed for ages under water, even before the creation of man, since nothing short of an immense duration in that state could have produced a sufficient quantity of *madrepores* and other testaceous fish, to form, by their decomposition, so very large a portion of the present globe as that which consists of calcareous substances.

To such reasoners as these we cannot better reply than in the words of a writer whose intimate acquaintance with the arcana of natural science, no less than his universal learning, entitle his opinions to the highest respect.* “Were it indeed certain,” says he, “that masses of chalk and limestone could not, even by Omnipotence, be formed but of the shells of fish, this last objection to the Mosaic account of the formation of the earth, and its subsequent destruction by a flood, would be unanswerable; but the most plausible theory which has yet been formed in *opposition* to Moses, would not even then be without its difficulties. Have these men of science, who are so intimately acquainted with the secrets of nature, as to be able to delineate the plan on which the world was formed, ever employed their art to discover how or of what materials these testaceous fish are themselves formed. It is very true, that the principal component part of them, as well as of chalk and marble, &c., is *lime*, or *carbonate* of lime; but I believe that the proportion of *pure lime* that is found by analysis in *madrepores* and oyster-shells, is not equal to that which is found in some species of marble and other calcareous substances. Why then

* See Stackhouse’s History of the Bible, by Bishop Gleig, whose words are quoted, Vol. i. p. 171.

should we suppose that all calcareous substances are formed of the shells of fish, rather than that these shells are formed of calcareous substances? Iron is found in all blood. Must we thence conclude that no iron ore existed, till red-blooded animals had furnished the materials of which it is composed?

“The truth is, that there are comparatively but few simple substances in nature (the ancient philosophers, with Newton among the moderns, thought that there is but one) of which all the bodies on this earth are formed; and it is entirely owing to the different combinations of these elementary substances, that the various bodies composed of them possess such different qualities, and exhibit such different appearances. The greatest quantities of petrified shells are indeed generally found in masses of calcareous gravel, and in rocks of marble and limestone; but this fact surely furnishes no ground for the inference, that such gravel and rocks were formed, under water, of those shells. Would it not (to use the words of an ingenious author*) be much more logical to conclude, that the shells were composed of calcareous particles, because the animals which carry them fed on that kind of earth, or on plants which spring from it! Animals draw their sustenance and their growth from the food which supports them; and each class accordingly establishes itself, or is established, by the Author of Nature, where its proper nourishment is most abundant. That nourishment is drawn either directly from the earth itself, indirectly from those plants which the earth produces, or from the flesh of other animals which have been fattened on it, or on its products; and it is assimilated to the body of the animal by a chemical process, which we can neither imitate nor fully comprehend.

“There is a power, however, which directs that

* See Howard's *Thoughts on the Structure of the Globe*.

process so as to carry to every organ of the body the precise substances that are wanted, and to expel such as are useless. *Febrin*, for instance, is regularly deposited in the muscles, and *phosphate of lime* in the bones; and when a new bone is to be formed in the place of an old one diseased, or carried off by the absorbents, larger quantities of *phosphate of lime* than were before necessary are carried to the proper place, because the *phosphate of lime* is the principal ingredient in the composition of bones. These are facts which experiments have rendered incontrovertible; and is it possible to doubt that when the shells of testaceous fish are injured or thrown off, a superabundant quantity of the *carbonate of lime*, the predominant ingredient in such substances, is carried to the proper place, that by a similar process it may be made to repair the injury which the shell has suffered? All animals prosper and multiply most when they have the greatest supply of food congenial to their nature, and as shellfish of every kind are found in much greater numbers on some coasts than on others, is it not reasonable to conclude that the greatest quantity of fossil shells have been found in masses of calcareous matter, only because the living animals abounded in the midst of matter best adapted to furnish them with their proper nourishment?

“That no fossil remains of human beings have any where been found, has indeed been often asserted by the modern world-builders, but the assertion seems not to be entitled to implicit credit. Cuvier, for example, informs us that ‘most of the labourers in the gypsum quarries about Paris are firmly persuaded, that the bones which they contain are, in a great part, human; but, after having seen and examined many thousands of these bones, I may safely affirm,’ continues he, ‘that not a single fragment of them has ever belonged to our species.’” Our author here pursues his argument by demanding, “On this occasion, whom shall

we believe? a single philosopher who has some novel theory to support, or a succession of many illiterate workmen, whose judgment we cannot suppose to be warped by any favourite hypothesis?"—We have no hesitation in replying, that were Cuvier opposed by no higher authority than that of the illiterate workmen in the gypsum-quarries, we should at once prefer his hypothesis to theirs, because we know how easy it is for the unscientific to be deceived on such subjects; but others, besides illiterate workmen, have asserted that the fossil remains of human bones are to be met with, and to these we cannot at least refuse an equal degree of credit as to Cuvier. Thus the celebrated *Spallangani* brought to Pavia relics of this description which he found in the Island of Cerigo, whilst Howard, no credulous person, affirms, that such discoveries are by no means rare. "Petrified human bones," says he, "are found, not in small, but in very great numbers, incased in the solid rock, or heaped together in subterraneous caverns, opened by the works carried on to improve the fortifications of Gibraltar. Their petrification proves them to be of very ancient date, and that the substances of which the rocks are composed, formerly in a loose state, when unexposed to the influence of salt-water and air, have had time to be hardened into stone by their joint operation.

"It appears, therefore, that from fossil bones no evidence has yet been discovered that this globe was inhabited by the inferior animals for ages before the formation of man. Human bones have been found in that state in masses, which we have every reason to believe to be of equal antiquity with those which contain the fossil remains of other animals. But still, it will be said, that, according to the present laws of nature, these mixtures and depositions cannot have taken place during the short period in which Moses represents the waters of the abyss as having entirely covered the earth. This is indeed true, and yet if we

attend to the order or course in which he describes the waters as prevailing, we shall find reason to believe that all these chemical combinations and decompositions have been made in these very waters.

“The editor of Cuvier’s *Essay on the Theory of the Earth*, in his account of that author’s geological discoveries, says, ‘that all the fossil species of quadrupeds which he had just enumerated, have been found in the alluvial soil which covers the bottoms of valleys, or is spread over the surface of plains. All of them are strangers to the climate where these bones now rest. The five species of mastodons alone, may be considered as forming a distinct and hitherto unknown genus nearly allied to that of the elephant. All the others belong to genera still existing in the torrid zone. Three of these genera, namely, the rhinoceros, hippopotamus, and elephant, occur only in the old world. The fourth, the tapir, exists only in the new world. The fossil species included under the known genera differ sensibly from the present species, and are certainly not mere varieties. Of all the eleven fossil species, the large hippopotamus is the only one which we cannot say with certainty does not belong to the present living species of that genus. These different fossil bones are found almost every where in beds of nearly the same kind, generally alluvial, and either sandy or marly; and are often promiscuously mixed with bones of animals resembling the species of the present time. It is therefore probable that they have been enveloped by the last, or one of the last catastrophes to which our earth has been subjected.’

“This is the narrative of an author who appears not to consider the Mosaic Deluge as sufficient to account for the phenomena which he details; but it is a narrative which displays his candour and love of truth; and if it can be shown that the Deluge described in the Book of Genesis is sufficient to account for these petrifications, it is to be hoped that professor

Jamieson will pay at least as much respect to the reports of Moses, as to those of any modern geologist.

“By the Hebrew geologist, the Mosaic Deluge is attributed to the opening of the windows of heaven, and the breaking up of the fountains of the great deep or abyss. Though I think it very probable, that the atmosphere is capable of keeping suspended in the form of vapour a much larger quantity of water than is commonly supposed, it is obvious that we cannot have recourse to the opening of the windows of heaven, whatever be the quantity of water which falls from them, for the petrifying of the bones of animals, and bringing them from different quarters of the earth to one place. But it has been inferred from the present appearance of the great continents of the terraqueous globe, that there has, at some distant period, been the most tremendous disruptions of the fountains of the great abyss, chiefly in the regions of high southern latitudes, the waters issuing northward with inconceivable fury at first, but growing less violent towards the end of their progress. This course of the waters accounts sufficiently not only for the ark having been carried northwards from the region of Babylonia, where it appears to have been built, till it was arrested in its course by Mount Ararat, but also for the multitudes of fossil bones of elephants and other tropical animals being found in high northern latitudes; and if among these there really be found any species or genus, such as the mastadon and mammoth, which is now absolutely lost, I know nothing in the Bible which obliges us to believe, either that Noah collected into the ark a male and female of *every* species of animals which then existed, from one pole of the earth to another, or that all those pairs propagated their kinds in the region of Babylonia. It is the opinion of the learned Stillingfleet, and founded on Scripture, that various pairs of every species of animals were at first created in the different regions of the

earth, and placed in the climates respectively adapted to their several constitutions. But if this be so, one or two, or even more species may have completely perished in the Deluge, or have perished since, in consequence of the prodigious change, whether for the better or the worse, which must have been produced in the soil and climate of this globe by that tremendous event.

“ But the waters, when they had prevailed one hundred and fifty days upon the earth,* were at last commanded to subside. How was this effected, and whither did they retire? The learned chronologist Dr. Hales, has shown, from the present appearance of the globe, that they probably retired again into the abyss, chiefly through other disruptions made towards the north pole.

“ Thus, if we inspect the surface of the world, the deep indentations of the southern coasts of Asia, Africa, and America, and the bold projecting capes of the peninsula of Hindostan, of Good Hope, and of Horn, with the disruptions of Ceylon, Madagascar, and of Terra del Fuego from the continent; the chaotic appearances of the Ghauts of Hindostan, of the mountains of Abyssinia and Caffraria, and of those in the neighbourhood of the Straits of Magellan, which are

* It is not necessary to suppose that the waters prevailed over the whole surface of the earth at *one* and the *same time*. If the fountains of the great deep were broken up towards the south pole, and the progress of the waters was northward, it is evident that the southern regions must have been first inundated; and as it is absurd to attempt to account for all the phenomena of the Deluge, without calling in the miraculous interposition of Him who first created, and has ever since sustained, the globe, the waters may have been impelled forward, leaving the mountains of the regions behind them dry, as soon as all the living creatures in these mountains were destroyed. This could be done by a temporary change of the centre of gravity, or by many other means easy to Omnipotence; and if such was the case, much of the difficulty respecting the quantity of water necessary to overwhelm the whole earth, is at once removed.

described by the most intelligent travellers as if they had been torn up by the roots, turned topsy-turvy, or piled upon each other in wild confusion : whereas the mountains of northern Asia, Europe, and North America, assume tamer aspects and more regular forms, we have no longer room to doubt of the northerly progress of the cataracts of the deluge from high southern regions.

“ There are also traces of prodigious disruptions of the earth in high northern regions, as if to absorb the redundant waters from the south. Thus, the coasts of Norway are the most abrupt and the highest known on the ocean, rising from the level of the sea to the height of from 300 to 900 toises or fathoms. From these the general face of the country slopes till it meets the Baltic, under whose basin, part of its former surface lies deep buried. In the shock of the sudden fall of such extensive tracts into the subterraneous vaults, vast fissures were opened in its uplifted parts, forming at present the most frequent, the deepest, and the narrowest creeks yet known in any part of the world.”

If the waters of the flood were carried off in this manner, it is evident that it would be only from the higher grounds that they receded in the compass of a year, or indeed for many years ; for though the divine power caused a *wind* to pass over the waters to excite evaporation, the deeper valleys in the temperate zones could hardly be emptied, or even the low-lying plains be reduced to perfect dryness, in a short space of time, by the ordinary process of evaporation. Not only were those plains and valleys completely flooded to a great height, but their bottoms also must have been reduced to mire to a considerable depth ; and many phenomena occur every year, which sufficiently prove, that before all this moisture could be removed by evaporation, a period of time must have elapsed of sufficient duration, for the superincumbent waters

to produce all the effects which our modern geologists justly think could not have been produced in the compass of a year. It is only in beds calculated to produce petrifications by a natural process, that, according to these philosophers themselves, fossil bones are found; but in such beds, and under certain kinds of mineral waters, petrifications are known to be formed with great rapidity. Under the foundations of the city of Quebec, in Canada, when it came into the possession of the English, there was found amongst the lowest beds of strata to which the workmen proceeded, a petrified savage, with his quiver and arrows in great preservation; and though it was impossible to ascertain the time when that man had been buried under the ruins, he must have been there for a much shorter period than would be requisite to dry deep valleys, or even low-lying plains, after the general Deluge. It is indeed well known, that there are waters so completely impregnated with the carbonate of lime and other mineral substances, as to petrify wood and the bones of animals in a very short space of time; and we have every reason to believe, that many fruitful vales that now wave with corn, were under water for ages after the general Deluge. It is therefore well observed by Mr. Parr, as quoted by Mr. Howard, that "of all the attempts to calculate the age of the world, the system of petrifications is the most unphilosophical, it being impossible to ascertain a process, depending on the quantity and quality of lapidific pieces, and other circumstances varied, *ad infinitum*, in different places, according to the nature of earths, waters, and air, and even of the position of the bodies on which the experiments are made."

There seems, therefore, to be no necessity for calling in question the accuracy of the Mosaic history of the Deluge, on account of the appearances exhibited by the terraqueous globe in its present state of existence. Even the objections which have been raised from the

length of time which appears to be requisite for the conversion of the surface of lava into vegetable soil, have been completely obviated by Howard and others, who have proved, that the matter, which, in the form of lava, issues from volcanoes, is of very different kinds, and that where vegetable soil has been found over real lava, it has been carried thither by some subsequent eruption vomiting forth ashes and other substances, which are easily converted by the sun and air into soil fit to receive and nourish the seeds of plants. No Christian pretends that every circumstance of the Deluge can be accounted for by physical causes, for God expressly claims to himself the immediate direction of the whole process. But that the whole earth has, once at least, been under water, all mankind are agreed. Moses informs us that it has been twice in that state, at periods far distant indeed, but not of such extravagant antiquity as some poets and chronologists pretend, or as the theories of modern deists require; and he adds that it was, at both periods, laid dry by physical causes, under the immediate control of Almighty God. Modern geologists admit the state of chaos in which water predominated, as well as of many subsequent deluges either general or partial, but some of them attribute these distinctions and renovations to the mere operation of *fire*, and others to chemical affinities, and the different laws of crystallization, without any superintendence or control of an all-powerful and intelligent mind. Whether it be most philosophical to consider chemical affinity and every species of attraction and crystallization as the results of the Divine volitions constituting them laws of nature, or as themselves the primary and only causes of the present state of the terraqueous globe, can hardly be a question with any man but such "as has not God in all his thoughts." To the worshippers of fire a plain man would indeed think it a sufficient answer to observe, that such an immense subterraneous fire

as heaved the whole continent of America from the bottom of the ocean, must have caused the whole waters of the ocean to boil, and thus have destroyed animal life entirely. Such is known to have been the case in those parts of the sea where small volcanic islands have been occasionally raised up. The fish have either fled from the spot, or were destroyed by the heat. Besides, philosophers know upon grounds of mathematical certainty that there cannot be such a vast fire in the centre of the earth; for to the question which some of them have put how such a fire could be supported in a hollow shell, from which all air and every known supporter of combustion is excluded, no satisfactory answer has yet been given. It will hardly be said that the fire at the centre of the earth is like gunpowder, supported by the oxygen of nitre, its principal ingredient, for the combustion of gunpowder is almost instantaneous, and a quantity of it, sufficient to have raised the great continents from the bottom of the sea, would, when ignited, have torn the whole globe into fragments, and then been extinguished. The theory, founded on the narrative of Moses, is encumbered by no such difficulties as this, for according to it, God was the immediate cause of the whole stupendous process, and the instruments employed by him, whether fire or water, or both, were completely under the control of Almighty power and perfect wisdom.

We have devoted so much space to the overthrow of difficulties, in themselves, neither trifling nor unimportant, that our notice of minor objections must necessarily be confined within very narrow limits. The great age of our antediluvian ancestors is a mere matter of fact, resting its claims to belief upon the assertion of an author who professes to write by divine inspiration. If, therefore, that author's assumption be capable of proof (of which there can be no doubt in any impartial mind), the fact itself must be admitted,

otherwise we shall fall into inconsistencies the most flagrant in themselves, and leading to the very worst consequences. But as there appear to be many and strong reasons why the lives of the first generations should be much more protracted than the term granted to mankind now, it may not be amiss briefly to bring one or two of these before the recollection of the reader.

It has been urged by many able writers, both Jewish and Christian, that the simple nature of the food eaten by the antediluvians, as well as a climate more genial than any where prevails at present, were both instrumental in producing that great longevity, which all chroniclers, profane as well as inspired, have attributed to the fathers of the human race. There is nothing impossible in this, indeed it is highly probable; for we see no reason to believe that man became a carnivorous animal till after the great Deluge; yet the supposition, though allowed to be true, scarcely solves the question why advantages should have been vouchsafed by our common Maker to them, which are not granted to us.

If, however, there appear to be in the intellectual nature of man himself something which seems to require that the period of life, granted to individuals, should be more extended in the infancy, than in the maturity of society, then is the whole matter set at rest, because the phenomenon is at once traced back to the goodness and wisdom of the Creator.

Now it must be obvious to the least reflecting, not only that the process of peopling the earth, required at first a greater longevity in the human race, than would be necessary after it became adequately colonised, but that the advancement of the race itself from barbarism into civilization and refinement could not have taken place, had not each person been permitted to live during a much longer space of time

than is found to be the case at present in every portion of the globe. The first generations having no past experience to look back upon, must have owed all their knowledge to their own individual exertions; and how far these would have carried them in the short space of seventy or eighty years, we need only examine the condition of the wandering tribes in America to discover. It was not, however, in accordance with God's gracious design in creating, that man, whom he had appointed the head of this lower world, should live and die a savage; and hence he appointed to the antediluvians many centuries of existence, that they might discover, follow up, and lay the foundations of knowledge for all future ages, in every useful and ornamental art. That they actually did all this, we are firmly persuaded, as well from the hints dropped by Moses in his genealogical account of the Cainites, as from the recollection that the process of smelting metals, building towers and cities, the sciences of astronomy and mensuration, were familiar to the first colonists, who settled themselves in what may be termed the new world; whilst the gigantic specimens of their handicraft, which remained to comparatively later ages, proved that in the uses and application of machinery they were at least as well versed as ourselves. But the necessity for so very protracted an existence being of a temporary nature, God wisely withdrew it, as soon as it had attained its purposes; and he did so, not more in wisdom, than in mercy, to the creature whose mortal life he curtailed. As we have already seen, though their prodigious age doubtless contributed greatly to the advancement of the antediluvians in knowledge and refinement, it is beyond a question that the same circumstance tended, more perhaps than any thing besides, to introduce moral corruption into the world, which corruption became, in all probability, more and

more flagrant as the increased ingenuity of mankind enabled them to devise new methods of gratifying the senses.

Thus God permitted the first races to live long upon the earth, that they might themselves attain to perfection in the cultivation of the sciences, and leave them to their posterity, even though the boon of longevity proved mischievous to their own moral purity, whilst the groundwork of knowledge being laid, he took away the stumblingblock in the way of man's obedience, by decreeing that "the time of man's life should be fourscore years."

The last objection which we deem it necessary to notice, turns upon the inability of Noah's ark, as described by the inspired historian, to fulfil the purposes for which it was intended. Such a vessel, as it is represented to have been, could not make way in the water, whilst its dimensions are wholly inadequate to contain so numerous an assemblage of living creatures, as are stated to have found shelter therein, with provisions and water for one year's consumption. Besides as one window only is spoken of, it seems impossible to conceive how so many animals, supposing them to have been stowed within so small a compass, should not have perished at once by suffocation.

To the first objection we need only observe, that though Moses makes mention of little else besides the dimensions of the ark, it does not therefore follow that it was unprovided with a convex keel, or otherwise incapable of passing easily through the water. But were the case otherwise, as the design of the ark was not to make way like a modern ship, but to preserve a certain number of creatures from destruction, it would fully answer that end were it so formed as to float buoyantly and steadily on the surface. Now it may be proved to demonstration that the proportion of the length to the breadth, and of both to the height in Noah's ark, is exactly that which renders any sub-

stance the most buoyant, and the most perfectly secure even in a storm; and hence, though we may well believe that no violent winds were permitted to reach it, and that the fury of the stream was spent ere the ark began to float, it appears that as far as the shape of the ark is concerned, no blunder has been committed by him who describes it.

To the next objection it may be stated, that as the admeasurement of the ark has been accurately taken from the data furnished by Moses, it is sufficient for us to assert, that it amounted in all to 42,413 tons. This is indeed a monstrous vessel, possessing a capacity of stowage equal to that of eighteen ships of the line of the largest class, which upon a very moderate computation are capable of carrying 20,000 men, with stores and provisions for six months' consumption, besides 1800 pieces of cannon. Now when we come to reflect that all the various distinct species of four-footed animals may be reduced to two hundred or two hundred and fifty, can we for a moment doubt that the ark would contain the specified proportion of these, of birds, insects, and eight human beings, with provisions and water adequate to their wants during a single year? The truth indeed is, as Bishop Wilkins justly observes, "that of the two, it is much more difficult to assign a number and bulk of necessary things to answer the capacity of the ark, than to find sufficient room for the several species of animals already known to have been there." The objection, therefore, which rests upon the incapability of the ark to furnish accommodation to its cargo, falls to the ground.

The last objection, which turns upon the inadequacy of one window to admit an adequate supply of light and air to so many animals, seems to us to be even more frivolous than either of the preceding. Though God gave the model of one window only, we have no right to assert that only one was framed. On the contrary, if we take the word, which is in our transla-

tion rendered "window," to signify something shining or pervious to light, as we fairly may, all that God will be represented as doing amounts simply to this—that he instructed Noah how to apply this substance, be it what it might, to the purpose of resisting the ingress of water, at the same time that it admitted light, whilst the expression "in a cubit shalt thou finish it above," appears distinctly to refer to the degree of slope given to the roof. But after all, it is perhaps a waste of time to reason with those, who call in question, not the fundamental evidences on which the authority of Scripture rests, but the minute details which here and there occur in it. If the Bible be the word of God, these details, however apparently singular or unaccountable, must be credited. This appears to us to be a mode of reasoning not to be controverted; though at the same time we firmly believe, that in all other instances, as in those before us, the facts, at which sceptics pretend to start, will be found, when examined, to be in themselves both reasonable and credible.*

* The following extract from the *Bibliotheca Biblica*, vol. ii. Occas. Annot. in the Appendix, though scarcely admissible in the text, appears too much to the purpose to be entirely omitted. Speaking of the window which Noah opened to let his dove fly, the writer says, "It is very observable that the words which we render window, in chap. vi. verse 16, and chap. viii. verse 6, of Genesis, are far from being the same. In the former place the word is *zohar* (the nature of which we shall have a proper occasion to explain), in the latter it is *hhalon*, which signifies, indeed, an oval hole or window in any building, but here is a window of a peculiar denomination. That it was customary among the Jews to have a room in the upper part of their houses, set apart for divine worship, in Hebrew called *bethalijah*, or simply *alijah*, in Greek *hyperoon*, and in Latin *oratorium*; and that in this place of prayer there was always a *hhalon*, a hole or window, which pointed to the Kebla, or place whereunto they directed their worship, is evident from several passages of Scripture. Among the Jewish constitutions, in the code called *beracoth*, there is a certain canon grounded upon this custom, 'That no man shall pray but in a room where there is a *hhalon*, opening towards the Holy City; and of Daniel it is positively related that when he knew that the decree for his destruction was signed,

‘he went into the house, and *his hhalon*, his window, being opened in his chamber towards Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a-day, as he did aforetime :’ for that this was not a common window, but one dedicated to religious worship, is plain from the people’s discovering by its being open, that he was at prayers.

“Now, as the practice among the Jews of worshipping in upper rooms, with their faces towards a hole or window in the wall, was never introduced by any positive law, and yet universally prevailed, it is reasonable to believe, that at first it was derived from Noah, and that the windows in their oratories were made in imitation of his *hhalon*, or point of adoration in the ark.”

We have quoted this, not, as the reader may well believe, for the purpose of discussing with its ingenious author his theory of the *hhalon*, but merely to show, that from the use of two distinct meanings, it is quite clear that Noah’s ark neither was, nor was intended to be lighted by one window only.

CHAPTER IV.

Descent from the ark.—Noah's death.—Objections noticed, and answered.

A. M. 2257 to 2857.—B. C. 3154 to 2554.

It is not easy to imagine the delight which Noah and his family must have experienced, when on looking abroad from their dreary habitation, they beheld the earth once more delivered from the waters, and nature smiling as she had been accustomed to do, ere the terrible Deluge began. That they were eager to step forth and enjoy again the blessing of liberty we may well believe, yet an apprehension that the danger was not yet passed, or a fear of offending God by too great precipitancy, seems to have detained them within the ark for some time after they saw that the Deluge had subsided. At last, however, God took pity upon the prisoners, "and spake unto Noah, saying, go forth of the ark, thou, and thy wife, and thy sons, and thy sons' wives with thee. Bring forth with thee every living thing that is with thee, of all flesh, both of fowl and of cattle, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth; that they may breed abundantly in the earth, and be fruitful and multiply upon the earth." This was a gracious command, implying a no less gracious promise, and the fathers of the new world, glad at heart, lost no time in obeying it.

It has been stated in the previous pages, that Noah carried with him into the ark an unequal number of

animals of all species; that of some species seven males and as many females, of others only one male and one female were preserved. The former of these are in Holy Writ called clean, doubtless because from them God was in the habit of exacting those sacrifices which he had taught man to offer; or it may be that Moses, who wrote more especially for his countrymen, employs the terms clean and unclean, as they were used in the congregation of Israel. Be this as it may, the first use which Noah made of his deliverance was to build an altar to the God who had preserved him, and to offer upon it a sacrifice of thanksgiving of every clean beast and of every clean fowl. With this act of pious gratitude, Jehovah was well pleased, and he promised that, though the imagination of man's heart be evil from his youth up, he would not curse the ground any more for man's sake, neither would he again smite every thing living as he had done. While the earth remaineth, continued God, "seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease."

Concerning the precise geographical position of the spot, where this important transaction occurred, many and widely different conjectures have been hazarded. It is neither worth while to examine the claims to reception, which these severally advance, nor to waste a longer space upon the subject at all, than may be necessary to state, that by far the most probable opinion is, that which pronounces Mount Ararat to be the same with Mount Musis in Armenia. Mount Musis, as well as the mountains of Cardu, overlook the plain of Mesopotamia, of which Shinar forms a part; and as the first colonists are said to have made excursions as far as Shinar, that fact of itself seems to imply, that Ararat could not be very distant. A strong tradition, moreover, prevails throughout the whole of the east, that Musis is the Ararat of Moses; and as such traditions, when widely extended, and of long

continuance, usually rest upon truth, we shall not greatly err if we give credit to this.

As Noah was always a devout and pious man, we may readily believe, that he by no means considered his debt of gratitude wiped out by this his first great sacrifice. On the contrary, he was doubtless regular and frequent in his devotions, which Almighty God received with so much favour, that he replied to them by blessings and assurances of his continued protection. As he had done to the first pair, so he did to Noah and his sons; "he blessed them and said unto them, be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth." He granted to them, likewise, the same dominion which Adam had possessed over the brute creation; and he added this privilege to all which man had hitherto enjoyed, that Noah and his descendants were authorized to kill for food any of the inferior animals, all being delivered absolutely into their hands. One restriction only was imposed upon man, namely, that he should display no unnecessary cruelty in the exercise of his power, by eating "the flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood." Moreover, the life of man was rendered more than ever sacred, a strict account being demanded of it both from man and beast, insomuch that every man or beast which slew him that bore the image of God, should surely be put to death. This is a very remarkable expression, and it clearly implies, as we took occasion formerly to observe, that the image of God, in which man was created, could not consist in any quality, moral or physical, which was destroyed by the fall.

It was but natural that man, just escaped from so tremendous a judgment as the Deluge, should experience the liveliest apprehensions, as often as clouds began to collect, that a second deluge should ensue. To deliver him from that dread, God distinctly promised, that he would never again destroy the earth by water; and he set up a sign, of all others, the best

calculated to assure man that his promise would not be violated—"This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you, and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth."

We are not ignorant that to the above expression several objections have been raised. Are we to suppose, it has been asked, that a rainbow was never seen till after the Deluge, aware as we are, that the phenomenon results from the immutable laws of the refraction and reflection of the sun's rays in the drops of falling rain? If the case be so, then are we bound to believe, also, that there had been neither clouds nor rain previous to the flood; but as this is extremely improbable, how could the bow, with whose appearances Noah was already acquainted, be to him any assurance, that another deluge would not take place?

We will endeavour to answer these questions, not because we consider them as deserving of an answer, but because they have not unfrequently been put.

There is no reason to believe either that rain had never fallen, previous to the commencement of the flood, or that the bow had never made its appearance in the clouds till after Noah's sacrifice. On the contrary, the language of Moses, in the early part of his history, seems to imply, that though during the six days' cosmogony no rain fell, it fell soon afterwards, and if the constitution of nature was from the first, what it continues to be now, it could not have fallen without producing the phenomenon which we call a rainbow. These facts, for such we take them to be, so far from injuriously affecting the credibility of Scripture, only tend to place its reasonableness in a point of view more conspicuous than ever.

It seems to be a very vulgar prejudice to believe, that the antediluvian inhabitants of the earth were men ignorant of all sciences, natural as well as moral.

This we have endeavoured to prove, at length, elsewhere; and if our reasoning be admitted as sound, the difficulty stated here falls to pieces of its own accord. If Noah was well acquainted with the particular law of nature, to which the appearance of the rainbow is owing, so far from the phenomenon itself bringing with it no assurance of safety, it is not easy to imagine a more appropriate token than that which God established between himself and the earth. Noah could not be ignorant that the phenomenon of the rainbow is totally incompatible with such rain as that which contributed to the Deluge, and hence Noah could not but feel, as often as the bow appeared, that no second deluge was at hand. The truth, indeed, is, that the sole difficulty here hinges upon the use of the phrase, "I do set my bow in the cloud," a form of speech which seems to imply that the bow had never appeared in the cloud before; but the words in the original might have been with equal and even greater propriety rendered, "I do appoint my bow, which is in the cloud, to be a token," by which every thing like equivocation or misapprehension afterwards would have been at once prevented. Taking them thus, then, as they certainly ought to be taken, is it possible to conceive a more appropriate sign than the rainbow, which the patriarch well knew never had existed, nor ever could exist, except when there is sunshine, as well as rain? God promised to Noah and his family that the earth should never again be destroyed by a general deluge; the only security for that promise was the known good faith of the Promiser; and to that assurance the most novel, or the most supernatural appearance could have added nothing: as, on the contrary, had they been ignorant of the divine veracity, no phenomenon whatever could have given them confidence in the promise of any thing future. Had Noah, indeed, been made acquainted with God's covenant or promise by a third person, speaking in the name of

the Lord like a Jewish prophet, there would certainly have been occasion for a prodigy or some supernatural appearance to accompany the promise. But for what purpose? Not to give credit, surely, to the veracity of God, but to the veracity of the messenger, who professed to declare God's will. No messenger, however, was sent from heaven on this occasion, for God revealed his own will immediately to those, who perfectly remembered his threatenings of the Deluge, who knew by experience how completely he had executed those threatenings, and who had themselves just escaped from the general destruction.

What purpose, then, was served by the rainbow? The very best purpose, so well expressed by the sacred historian, when he represents God as saying, "This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you, and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations;" for natural and inanimate objects, such as pillars and heaps of stones, were considered as tokens, and even a kind of witnesses in the contracts of all the civilized nations of remote antiquity. Of this we have several instances in the books of the Old Testament; but surely not one so apposite as that of the rainbow. Noah and his sons undoubtedly knew, either by the science of the antediluvian world, or by the immediate teaching of God, that the rainbow is a physical proof, as long as it is seen, that a general deluge is not to be dreaded, and therefore if their minds, filled with terror and astonishment at what they had escaped, should ever have become fearfully apprehensive of a future deluge, the sight of the bow would immediately dissipate their fears. The science of Noah and his sons, which taught them the physical connexion of this sign with the thing signified, was indeed soon lost, with other truths of greater importance, when their descendants were scattered in small tribes over the face of the whole earth; but the remembrance of the flood, as well as

some confused notions that the rainbow conveyed some information from the gods to men, appear to have been preserved by tradition among all nations, and thousands of pious Christians without knowing any thing of the physical causes of the rainbow, consider it, at this day, as a token, and even as a pledge (as in truth it is), that the earth shall not again be destroyed by a deluge.

The remainder of Noah's history, as recorded by Moses, contains but few events deserving of particular notice. Having applied himself, as it was natural that he should, to the pursuit of husbandry, the patriarch, we learn, planted a vine, and drinking too freely of the wine, fell asleep in his tent, with his body uncovered, and in a very immodest posture. Ham, who espied his father in this condition, instead of concealing his weakness, proclaimed it aloud, and made him the subject of scorn and derision to his two brothers, Shem and Japheth. These, however, not only refused to join in Ham's indecent mirth, but took a garment, and placing it upon their shoulders, went backwards towards their father, and piously dropped it over him as he lay. The probability is, too, that not content with this, they watched him during the remainder of his sleep, so as to hinder a similar occurrence from taking place; and doubtless replied to the inquiries, which we may imagine him to have put on awaking, by giving an account of the whole transaction as it happened. Noah's indignation was naturally excited by the shameful behaviour of Ham; he poured out upon him, and his posterity through Canaan, that remarkable curse, which doomed them to be "the servants of servants," whilst Shem and Japheth received each a blessing, which time, in its progress, has conspicuously fulfilled.

Such is a summary of all that Moses tells us concerning Noah, after his departure from the ark, at the period of the subsiding of the Deluge. He lived as the father of a new world no fewer than three hundred

and fifty years, and he died at the extreme old age of nine hundred and fifty.

There are but few circumstances in the preceding details, to which it appears necessary to advert, for the purpose of vindicating them from such objections as infidelity is apt to bring forward. The difficulty, if such it deserve to be called, relative to the establishment of the rainbow in the cloud, we have already sufficiently explained; whilst those which have been started with reference to other points, as they possess still less of reason, we had almost said of plausibility, so will they require even less of argument to refute and set them aside.—It has, for example, been asked why to Noah should have been granted the permission to eat animal food, seeing that no such grant was made to Adam, who, even in his state of innocence, was thus in a situation less fortunate than that afterwards occupied by his degenerate descendant. We have no hesitation in replying, that the grant of animal food originated, not in any idea of adding to man's enjoyments, but in necessity. It is well known that both the stomach and palate become so habituated to almost any kind of diet, as to derive the reverse of gratification from a change; and hence, he who concludes that by the grant of animal food an addition was made to the sensual pleasures of Noah and his sons, assumes as an admitted fact, a matter to which all experience stands opposed. The truth seems to be, that Noah and his sons were directed to kill the inferior animals for food, because the earth, though not rendered permanently more steril by the flood, must, for at least some time, have been rendered incapable of ripening fruits and vegetables in sufficient quantities for their support; and the permission was extended to men in all after-ages, because it undeniably tends to enlarge, if we may so speak, the sphere of God's benevolence. The very same thing may be said in vindication of God's arrangements, by which some of the inferior ani-

mals seem to be formed for the mere purpose of furnishing sustenance to others; and it is not going too far to assert, that in their case at least this arrangement must have held good from the beginning. This earth could not support so great a number of animals as it does, if some of them did not prey upon others, for if neither men were to eat animal food, nor beasts of prey to devour their fellow-creatures, some of those creatures could never have been wanted, and therefore would not have been created; as the food by which they might have been sustained, would have been all pre-occupied by creatures placed above them in the scale of being. No doubt the matter which forms the bodies of those animals that now furnish food to men, and to beasts and to birds of prey, might have been converted into so many inanimate masses, into *pompions*, as Archbishop King expresses it, fitted to support the lives of men and beasts; but it is obvious that by this contrivance there would have been much less of life, and, therefore much less of enjoyment in the world than at present. Sheep and oxen, and even the more timid animals of the chase, enjoy life whilst it lasts, and are not rendered uneasy by the prospect of death, which they do not anticipate; and when death comes, as come it must to every living creature, whose origin is in the dust, it is of no consequence to them by what means, or to what purpose they die, provided the agonies of death be not protracted. It may be thought that the antelope and the stag suffer much anxiety in their repeated alarms by the roaring of the lion, and perhaps they do; but, probably their anxiety, like the anxiety of men, called upon repeatedly to face danger, is more than compensated by the satisfaction arising from escape.

Though we consider this answer as perfectly sufficient to satisfy the rational inquirer, we deem it proper to add, that many excellent divines have argued that God changed the diet of man, because he had

already determined to abbreviate the span of human life. This may be true, because we believe experience has established the fact, that a diet, of which animal food forms no part, if it tend not to increase the muscular power of man, renders him much less liable to disease. But if we are to seek for a solution of the enigma in reasons such as this, that of Theodoret appears still more worthy of credit;—"God," says he, "foreknowing that men in future ages would idolize his creatures, changed their diet from the fruits of the earth to the flesh of animals, that he might aggravate the absurdity, and make it more ridiculous by their consuming at their tables that to which they sacrificed at their altars, since nothing is more absurd than to worship what we eat."

Besides this objection, it has been urged that the account of Noah's drunkenness and indecency accords but little with our notions of a man taken, as the reward of his piety, under the especial protection of God; whilst the cursing of Ham, and the blessing of Shem and Japheth, have been ridiculed as the acts of a person still labouring under the influence of intoxication.

To the first part of this objection we reply, that though in our version, Noah is represented as "drinking of wine and being drunken," the original expresses no more than it elsewhere does, when Joseph's brethren are represented as drinking with him, and being merry. It may be, therefore, that Noah's drunkenness amounts to nothing more than that he refreshed himself with wine after the labour of the day, whilst the form of the garments worn by the ancients in general, may sufficiently account for his exposure, after he fell asleep. But granting that the translation ought to be viewed in the light in which it is usually represented, what do we learn from it? Simply that Moses was too faithful an historian to hide the faults even of the most upright among the characters of whom he makes mention, and that human na-

ture was, in the days of Noah, the same frail and fallible thing that it is now. Not only, therefore, is the detail to be received, but a great moral is to be drawn from it, because it is a happy illustration of what the apostle means when he says, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." It will be seen, that in accounting for Noah's error, we have not attended to the opinion prevalent among the rabbins, that the patriarch having accidentally effected the invention of wine, became overpowered in consequence of his ignorance of its intoxicating qualities. If the vine grew, as it doubtless did, in the antediluvian world, there is no reason to suppose that men should remain, during two thousand years, ignorant of the uses to which its fruit might be turned; whilst accidentally to discover a phenomenon, which depends upon a process so remarkable as fermentation, is nearly impossible.

With respect to Noah's conduct in blessing Shem and Japheth, and in cursing Canaan, were we bound to suppose that it took place immediately on the patriarch awaking out of sleep, then indeed it might not be easy to vindicate him from the charge of having acted under the impulse of momentary irritation; but there is nothing in Scripture to authorize such an opinion. On the contrary, though Moses, in his anxiety to render the details of the ancient world brief, subjoins the account of Noah's blessings and curses to the history of his exposure, we are no more bound to believe that the one event occurred immediately upon the other, than that the planting of the vineyard and the drinking of the wine were both the operations of a single day. Noah's dealings with his children have accordingly been regarded by the best authorities, in all ages, to have corresponded entirely with Jacob's behaviour towards his sons, whom he blessed before his death, and this is the more probable, seeing that Noah's predictions could not pos-

sibly affect the individuals to whom they were addressed. Nay, nor were the descendants of the person cursed, affected by that curse so long as they continued righteous, since we find in Abraham's days, Melchizedek among them, whose name was expressive of his character, King of Righteousness and Priest of the Most High God; whilst Abimelech, whose name imports *Paternal King*, pleaded the integrity of his heart, and the righteousness of his nature, before God, and his plea was admitted.

The curse upon Canaan was, that he should be a servant to Shem; and it was accomplished many centuries after, when the Israelites, the descendants of Shem, drove the Canaanites from their country, destroying multitudes by the sword, and reducing still greater multitudes to the condition of bondsmen. In like manner Canaan was doomed to be the servant of Japheth, and he became his servant, when the Greeks and Romans, descended from Japheth, subdued the relics of the Canaanites at Tyre, at Thebes, at Carthage, and throughout Africa; whilst the condition of the Africans at this day, as contrasted with the states and people of Europe and Asia, seems to be but the continuation of the destiny imposed upon the children of Ham by their great ancestor.

The blessing of Japheth implied that his territories should be enlarged. How this has been fulfilled, every one may judge for himself when he beholds, not Europe only, and Asia Minor, but Media likewise, part of Armenia, Iberia, Albania, with the extensive regions peopled by the Tartar tribes, all owning his sway; whilst the declaration that "he should dwell in the tents of Shem," became strictly verified, when first Alexander, and afterwards the Cæsars, became masters of Jerusalem, and made the surrounding country tributary. But the blessing of Shem was of far more importance than this: it referred to the coming of the Messiah; that great event, to which all

other occurrences, in time, have been but as accessories, and it corresponded in every particular with the promise first made to Adam, and afterwards renewed to Noah. Like the curse of Canaan, and the less important blessing of Japheth, it, too, has received its accomplishment, the Redeemer having come from the stock of Shem, through Abraham and Judah.

It appears, therefore, that Noah's blessings and curses, so far from originating either in the fumes of undigested wine, or in momentary irritation, were the deliberate outpourings of a prophetic spirit, which, like that which in aftertimes possessed Israel, burned up with its brightest lustre just before it expired.

CHAPTER V.

Nimrod's ambition.—Building of the tower of Babel.—Its consequences.
—Objections noticed and answered.

A. M. 2857 to 3318.—B. C. 2554 to 2093.

WE have every reason to suppose, that for some years after the flood, Noah and his family dwelt together in the immediate vicinity of the mountains where the ark rested. As their numbers increased, however, and the means of subsistence became scanty, they gradually extended their settlements till they embraced the whole of Armenia; and when that province was found too narrow to contain them, they took possession of the adjacent fertile and pleasant regions of Assyria, Mesopotamia, and Media. That every movement made during the lifetime of Noah, was made at his suggestion, as it carries with it a great degree of plausibility, so has it been held to be true by the ablest writers; indeed, St. Paul himself, at Acts xvii. 26, seems to inculcate the belief, that to each of his sons the great patriarch distinctly allotted a particular portion of the world as an inheritance. It is of course impossible to argue this point on any other ground than that of probability; but the following opinion of Abulfaragi, supported as it is by that of the learned Dr. Hales, appears to us to deserve the deepest attention: "To the sons of Shem," says he, "was allotted the middle of the earth, namely Palestine, Syria, Assyria, Samaria,

(a town of Babylonian or Chaldean Irac) Babel, Persia, and Hagiur (or Arabia Petrea); to the sons of Ham, Tiernan (or Idumea) Africa, Nigritia, Egypt, Nubia, Scindia, and India (or western and eastern India, on both sides of the Indus). To the sons of Japheth also, Garbia (the north), Spain, France, the countries of the Greeks, Slavonians, Bulgarians, Turks, and Armenians." Of course these countries could be peopled only in succession, and by very slow degrees; nor is it necessary to believe that the family of mankind actually broke up into distinct commonwealths till after the decease of their common father.

These several migrations were already begun, and had, to a certain degree been carried into execution, when that memorable event befell, to which Scripture teaches us to trace back the diversity of languages which now prevails upon the earth. "In the 70th year of Reu,* the sixth in descent from Shem, about sixty years after the final division of the earth, and in the two hundredth year of the life of Peleg, a tribe of Cushites, descendants of Ham, which had established themselves beyond the Tigris, either dissatisfied with the portion which had fallen to them, or instigated by caprice, suddenly turned back from the east, and directed their faces westward. The leader of this tribe was Nimrod, a word signifying "the Rebel," who by his great boldness in attacking, and his success in destroying wild beasts, had acquired from those around him that respect which, in a semibarbarous state of society, is granted to no qualities so freely as to courage and bodily prowess. This man, arriving with his followers at a settlement of the Arphaxadites, the children of Shem, of remarkable fertility in the plain of Shinar, took forcible possession of the country; and rebelling against the divine decree, which through the medium of Noah, had assigned to each branch its portion, determined

* Hales's Chronology, with his account of Abel's sacrifice.

to establish himself there. It would appear, moreover, that the Cushites, not content to thwart the will of Providence in one particular, resolved totally to defeat its designs by extending their sovereignty over the whole earth. With this view they fell upon the device of building a tower, or fort, within which, if hard pressed, they might find refuge; whilst they carried arms, without hesitation, against all their brethren, whom they strove to bring under their arbitrary dominion.

Up to this moment, the human inhabitants of the world seem to have employed one common language. What that language was, whether as some imagine, the Hebrew, or as others, with at least equal plausibility suppose, some dialect now totally lost, it is impossible to determine; but of the fact, whether we trust to scriptural authority, or to the hardly less credible testimony of analogy and reason, it is impossible to doubt. It would appear, moreover, that the impious, as well as ambitious designs of Nimrod, were not a little forwarded by that circumstance; indeed it is easy to understand, how men, holding familiar and constant intercourse one with another, would be liable to become overawed by the superior courage and daring of one of themselves, to whom large numbers had already submitted. Under these circumstances it seemed good to unerring Wisdom immediately to interfere; and by placing mankind in a novel situation, to bring about the great designs of Providence, by compelling different tribes and families to seek for separate habitations, and forms of government, through a positive inability to dwell peaceably or advantageously together.

We have said that one of the measures of Nimrod for the attainment of universal sovereignty, was to erect a tower, or fortress, within which his plunder might at all times be secured, and his followers, in case of a repulse, find shelter. We are not ignorant that the language of Scripture has sometimes received a different interpretation; and that the erection of the

tower is represented as referring to an object totally distinct from that for which we have given Nimrod credit. In the 11th chapter of Genesis, for example, it is stated, that "the people said one to another, go to, let us build a tower whose top may reach to heaven;" from which commentators have drawn the inference, that these persons were so foolish and impious, as to imagine that they might guard against the danger of a future deluge, by erecting a tower of such a height, that the water should not be able to sweep over it. But not to dwell too much on the extreme improbability that any race of persons, accustomed to mountainous scenery, could entertain the idea that they could erect a tower, over which, waters that flooded the summits of Ararat, would not sweep, it appears to us, that the concluding clause of the verse wherein they are represented as saying, "and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth," places the transaction with the designs of its inventors, in their true light. Without a doubt Nimrod intended to resist the divine decree, which doomed mankind to separate themselves, and colonise the whole earth; and he conceived that this tower, whilst it furnished him with a place of safe retreat, would serve as a sort of landmark to keep the families of men together. That, however, which he impiously devised with a view to thwart the counsels of the Most High, was made to conduce, more than any thing which had yet befallen, to their advancement; and the building, begun to perpetuate the wisdom and greatness of its founder, remained a standing monument of his folly and absolute inability to counteract the designs of Providence.

It is of no small advantage in our endeavours to ascertain the precise site of this memorable edifice, that the inspired historian has given us a particular account of the materials of which it was composed. His expressions are, that the people had brick for stone, and slime

for mortar; the word *slime* being, in our version, substituted for the more appropriate term, bitumen; and as no builders have ever preferred brick to stone, where the latter could be procured in adequate quantities, we must believe, that the founders of Babel were driven to make use of hardened clay, because more solid materials lay not within their search. Now it is a well-attested fact, that the great plain of Babylon is not only remarkable for the absence of every thing like a stone-quarry, but that the soil chances to be particularly well fitted for the making of bricks; whilst bitumen, both solid and liquid, abounds there, in a degree unparalleled in any other quarter of the globe. To this fact Herodotus, Vitruvius, Strabo, Justin, with other ancient writers bear ample testimony; indeed, they represent the walls of the great city of Babylon, as it existed in the days of Cyrus, to have been held together by bituminous cement. We have, therefore, no hesitation in asserting our conviction that the tower of Babel must have stood somewhere in the plain of Babylon; nor does it imply any gross credulity to believe also, that the famous tower, so minutely described by Herodotus as a temple of Belus, though not one and the same with the edifice begun by Nimrod, was erected upon its site, and, in fact, with its materials.

With respect to the chronology of this portion of the history of mankind, it will be seen by our reference to the works of Abulfaragi and Dr. Hales, that we have here, as elsewhere, adopted the theory advanced by the latter of these eminent persons. Thus, by referring the dispersion, not to the era of Peleg's birth, as has sometimes been done, but to the two hundredth year of his age, we fix the date of Nimrod's insane attempt at the five hundred and fortieth year after the Deluge; and as it is unquestionably encumbered by none of those difficulties which attend other calculations founded upon different data, we see no reason why it should not be received as correct. It obviates, for example,

every objection arising out of the improbability that any portion of the human race would, during the lives of those who had witnessed the judgment of the Deluge, so far forget God as to act daringly in opposition to his will; whilst the difficulty, not less serious, of accounting for the existence of the multitudes of men whom such a work would unavoidably employ, ceases to have weight. Within the compass of five centuries, not only Noah, but all who, with him, found shelter in the ark, were gathered to their fathers. Mankind, likewise, were multiplied to a very great degree, and hence had become competent to almost any undertaking; but if we follow the opinions of those who hold that the dispersion took place during the year of Peleg's birth, receiving at the same time the calculations of the Masoretic writings, as determining when the latter event occurred, we shall be compelled to fix the date of the memorable transaction before us at an epoch absolutely repugnant to the suggestions of common sense. Peleg was the fifth in descent from Shem, and according to the Masoretic text was born in the one hundred and first year after the Deluge; therefore, if we receive as correct the vulgar opinion that the dispersion occurred in the year of his birth, we must also believe that within the short compass of a century, a single family of eight persons multiplied into various tribes, whilst their moral and religious depravity became such, that neither the admonitions of their rulers, nor the traces of God's power to punish, though still visible in all directions, were sufficient to restrain them from acting in defiance of a divine decree openly promulgated. We need scarcely observe that to such a theory all experience stands directly opposed; and hence we are compelled to reject both it, and the calculations on which it is made to depend. Even the Hebrew text, though in our opinion exhibiting manifest symptoms of corruption, gives no support to a theory so extravagant. It is true that Peleg, repre-

sented as having been born in the one hundred and first year after the Deluge, is said to have received his name, because in his days the earth was divided; but it by no means follows that the division in question took place immediately upon his birth, or for many years after. Peleg's name may have been bestowed upon him, as Abraham received his, prophetically, though the event to which it referred came not to pass till towards the close of his life; and as that is represented to have lasted throughout two hundred and thirty-nine years, we shall, according to the Masoretic text, have upwards of three centuries on which to calculate. But even this, though more to the purpose than one century, appears too short a space for the bringing about of objects so gigantic. It is better, therefore, to believe with Dr. Hales, that the chronology of the Hebrew text is defective, more especially as that of the Septuagint corresponds almost entirely with his; whilst the Samaritan copy, a work of great value and antiquity, places the era of the dispersion in the three hundred and ninety-sixth year after the Deluge. Between it, therefore, and Dr. Hales's view of the subject, there is a diversity of no more than forty-five years; whereas, the difference between the Samaritan and Hebrew copies embraces rather more than double that space of time.

The sacred historian informs us, that the rebellious Cushites had proceeded to a considerable extent in their undertaking, when Almighty God determined to interfere in an especial manner for its prevention. This was done by affecting their organs of speech in such a manner, that their articulation became irregular and confused, insomuch that they could no longer understand one another; nor, as a necessary consequence, act in concert. The consequence was, that quarrels and dissensions immediately arose among them; each looked upon himself as mocked and insulted by his neighbour, who addressed him in a dialect absolutely novel, and a union, framed for

purposes of rapine and outrage, became violently and outrageously dissolved. The workmen separated in anger, and scattered themselves abroad in small tribes over the countries originally allotted to them.

In this general breaking up of the universal monarchy, Nimrod seems by no means to have concurred. He still retained about him a band of fierce and impious followers, by whom he was regarded with unlimited respect; and by means of whom, though he found himself incompetent to carry on his great undertaking, he kept possession of the district which he had wrested from the Arphaxadites. Here he erected several towns, all of which are enumerated by Moses; after which, feeling his ambition still unsated, he made an inroad into Assyria, the territory of Assur, another of the sons of Shem. Once more successes attended his operations; and he built there a city, to which he gave the name of Nineveh, a word which denotes the dwelling or habitation of Ninus. Whether it was so called in honour of himself or of his son, authors are not agreed. It is generally thought to have been in honour of his son, but Dr. Hales is of a contrary opinion: the name Nimrod, as he observes, signifying a rebel, is not likely to have been assumed by himself, nor given to him by his father, but to have been imposed upon him as a mark of their abhorrence by the Shemites whom he oppressed. Ninus, however, literally signifying Son, may have been given, naturally enough, as a proper name to this most distinguished of all the sons of Cush; in comparison of whom the others would, in the estimation of that violent race, be considered as utterly insignificant; but of the son of Nimrod nothing remarkable is known.

Nimrod, as he was the first that subverted the patriarchal government, so is he thought to have introduced the Zabian idolatry of the heavenly host among his subjects, by whom he was believed, at his death, to be translated into the constellation Orion, that he might still,

attended by his hounds Sirius and Canicula, pursue his favourite game the Great Bear. In process of time he came to be deified and worshipped by the Phœnicians, Assyrians, and Greeks, under the names of Baal, Beel, Bel, and Belus, all of them signifying Lord or Master; whilst there is little doubt that he is the Bela Rama, that is, Bela the son of Rama, of the Hindoos. In a word, Nimrod appears to have been one of those remarkable characters of whom the fame went abroad into all the earth, and of whom, look where we may, we can discover no nation of antiquity which retains not, either in records or traditions, at least some trace. That he was brave, persevering, possessed of great bodily strength and high talents, seems to admit of no doubt whatever; but his impiety and tyranny were not less memorable than his valour; and hence, beyond a question, his name of bad pre-eminence, the Rebel.

We are not aware that to the details offered above any serious objection is likely to be offered; unless, indeed, it be boldly urged, first, that such a building as the tower of Babel was never erected at all, or secondly, that allowing the contrary to be the case, the account of its erection, as given by Moses, is wholly incredible. That writer is represented as stating, not that the Cushites under Nimrod, but that the whole race of men combined for the accomplishment of this extraordinary project; whilst if the Hebrew computation be correct, the combination must have taken place in the lifetime of Noah himself.

With respect to the latter of these difficulties we have already said enough to prove that it really possesses no ground of reason. It is a mere gratuitous assumption to suppose that the tower of Babel was begun to be built at the period of Peleg's birth; whilst it is perfectly impossible to believe that Shem, Ham, Japheth, and even Noah himself could so speedily forget the visitation of the flood as to enter, within the space of a century, into any scheme of rebellion against Jehovah. Nay, we may

go further, by venturing to assert, that in an act so glaringly impious as the building of the tower of Babel, the immediate descendants of Shem and Japheth are not very likely to have joined. It appears quite inconceivable that these men should have resisted the authority of their fathers and grandfathers, or despised their experience, confirmed as that experience must have been, by the remains of the ark certainly preserved long after that period, and by the evidence which the earth must have every where exhibited of its having been lately covered with water. These facts seem to furnish an insurmountable argument against the truth of the hypothesis that the tower of Babel was begun to be built within a hundred years after the flood, whilst the argument which opposes the notion that the whole race of mankind were embarked in the undertaking, appears no less conclusive. The great object of the builders was to prevent themselves from being scattered abroad, and to make to themselves a name. What they could mean by "making" to themselves a name, if all mankind were to share in that name, it is impossible to conceive; for in the estimation of whom, could all men, united in one society, be great or famous? That they were not idiots who undertook to build the tower and city of Babel, is evident from the judicious expedient on which they fell to supply the absence of stone and mortar; yet none but idiots could suppose it possible for the whole human race to live for ever, and multiply without dispersing themselves beyond the limits of Babylonia and Assyria.

But how are the explicit declarations of Moses to be met? For that he, at least, involves all mankind in the crime, seems to be undeniable. After assuring us that "by these, that is, by the descendants from Shem, Ham, and Japheth, were the nations divided in the earth after the flood," he observes, "And the whole earth was of one language and of one speech. And it came to pass as they journeyed from the east,

that they found a plain in Shinar." What is meant by this, if it be understood not to imply, that "the whole earth" took part in the project so miraculously interrupted.

As the preceding passage stands in our authorized version, there is no denying that it appears, at least, to favour the idea, that the whole human race were involved in this act of rebellion, because, according to the idiom of the English language, "the whole earth" may be made to stand for the people of the whole earth; but whoever takes the trouble to consult the Hebrew, the Septuagint, or the Vulgate version will find, that no such meaning is expressed there. In every one of these the passage runs thus: "And the earth was of one lip, and one voice was to them all; and it fell out during the journeying of those from the east." Now a minute's consideration will serve to satisfy the scholar, that the announcement as to the sameness of language, is, and must be, merely parenthetical, whilst the latter part of the sentence refers, and can refer, only to the "families of the sons of Noah after their generations, in their nations." All those, however, of whom it is afterwards said, "that by them were the nations divided in the earth after the flood," could not possibly be wandering in a body "from the east," the earlier stream of population being universally admitted to have set to the east, not from it. The wanderers westward could, therefore, be none others except a tribe which had previously gone to the east and become dissatisfied with their settlement; and that they were Cushites, headed, as above stated, by Nimrod, we have the combined authority of tradition, and palpable probability for believing.

But what authority have we for believing, that there ever existed such a tower as this of Babel at all? and above all, why attribute to a miracle wrought in punishment of its erection, that diversity of languages for which natural causes amply account? Of the actual

existence of the tower of Babel a few ages after the Deluge, no man can entertain a doubt, who is previously convinced of the authenticity and divine inspiration of the Book of Genesis. The fact being mentioned there in terms as positive as are employed to record the building of the ark, and the preservation of Noah and his sons, he must be possessed of a singular turn of mind indeed who can profess to credit the one, yet disbelieve the truth of the other; and hence, were we to content ourselves with affirming that the tower was certainly built, because it is so stated by Moses, we should do enough. But here, as in a variety of other instances, the details of Holy Writ receive a strong corroboration from ancient and universal tradition; for there is no tradition more ancient, nor any more general, than that which refers to the commencement of this memorable structure, and the interference of Divine power to check its progress. Thus Abydenus, as quoted by Eusebius, declares, that "the first race of men, big with a fond conceit of the bulk and strength of their bodies, built, in the place where Babylon now stands, a tower of such prodigious height that it seemed to touch the skies; but that the winds and the gods overthrew the mighty structure upon their heads." In like manner Eupolemus, as cited by Alexander Polyhistor, affirms, that "the city of Babylon was first built by giants who escaped from the flood; that these giants built the most famous tower in all history; and that the tower was dashed to pieces by the Almighty power of God, and the giants dispersed and scattered over the face of the whole earth." Again, whatever may be the value of the Sibyl's testimony, nothing can be more certain, than that she is referred to by Josephus as vouching for the truth of the Mosaic account. Indeed, there is not a scrap of ancient history extant, with one solitary exception, which fails to give the weight of its assurances, how-

ever these may be estimated, to the details of Holy Writ. All unite in asserting, that a huge tower was built by gigantic men at Babylon; that there was then but one language among mankind; that the undertaking was offensive to the gods; and that therefore they demolished the tower, overwhelmed the workmen, confounded their language, and dispersed them over the face of the whole earth.

But though such be undeniably the case, it is not necessary to suppose with some authors, that the tower in question was really a structure of prodigious dimensions, far less to confound it with that tower, or rather temple, of which Herodotus, in his history, gives an elaborate description. The language of Scripture is frequently figurative, even when it describes historical events, and that the expression "whose top may reach to heaven," is not to be understood literally, we possess ample ground for concluding. It could not be so understood by men who had looked upon such mountains as those of Ararat, whilst we know that it is elsewhere employed with reference to the cities of Canaan to denote no more than that they were surrounded with lofty, and probably, strong walls. But though quite distinct from the temple of Belus, and perhaps, as compared with that structure, both rude and of trifling dimensions, the tower of Babel might still deserve, in times so remote, to be accounted wonderful; whilst the proportion which it bore to the temple of Babylon in Xerxes's day, was, probably, not more extraordinary than that which the city of London now bears, to the Londinium, or Londinum of the Trinobantes. On the whole, therefore, we are bound to conclude, not only that some such tower did exist, but that it existed on the spot which afterwards supported Babylon, and that it would have been, when completed, at least sufficiently capacious to serve the purposes which it was designed to serve. What these purposes were we have already taken occasion to explain; but it is worthy of remark,

that many able writers suppose it to have served the double purposes of a place of defence, and a temple. Among others may be particularized the authority of Archbishop Tennison, who contends that the shape of the edifice was pyramidical; that it was so formed in order to assimilate it to the flame, which always ascends conically; and that it was erected in honour of the sun, as the god who dried up the waters of the great flood. There is, at least, nothing impossible in this; and if Nimrod was the founder of the Zabian idolatry, as all antiquity seems to indicate, the notion is highly probable.

We come now to the last objection urged against the truth of the Mosaic history, namely, that which would denounce the idea that a diversity of languages was originally brought about by a miracle. As this is a mere question of fact, all reasoning about it seems useless, for all must end here, either that the case is so, or that it is not. Such as believe the Bible will believe the account given there; such as disbelieve the Bible will, in the face of it, and of universal tradition, look elsewhere for a cause adequate to account for an undeniable phenomenon. For our own parts we consider the history of Moses to exhibit so much more of probability than any theory which has yet been advanced, that, independently of our reliance upon him as an inspired author, we are at once disposed to adopt his sentiments; whilst, taking the belief of his inspiration into consideration, we know not how his assertions are to be contradicted.

The whole of the arguments against the Mosaic account, may be compressed within a very narrow compass. They amount simply to this;—that the cause of the variety of languages in the world is grounded in reason and nature, in the difference of climates, in the unsettled temper of mankind, in the necessary mutability of sublunary things, in the rise and fall of empires, in that constant change, in short,

which is continually going on throughout the whole compass of human affairs. It is useless, therefore, to have recourse to miracles in a case where miracles are not needed; since it is only necessary to suppose that all languages now extant sprang from one common root, and that they are no more than different forms and dialects of the same tongue, which the lapse of time, assisted by certain incidental causes, has produced.

We have already said, that no man who believes the Bible can have recourse to this theory, however plausible it may appear, seeing that the matter of fact is differently accounted for in the inspired volume; but the theory itself, independently of all recourse to other grounds of objection, seems scarcely to be supported by experience. Not to affix a higher value than they deserve to the numerous, and as it were radical contrarieties which abound between the constitution of the eastern, the western, and the northern tongues, it may be observed that languages vary but little, even in the lapse of many centuries, unless those who speak them be either overrun, or drawn into close and intimate connexion with states which employ other languages. The Roman language, for example, was brought to considerable perfection before the time of Plautus; and though some obsolete words may occasionally appear in his writings, yet any man who understands Latin may read with ease every work which appeared in that language from the days of Plautus down to the era of Theodoric the Goth. This, however comprises a period of no less than seven hundred years; and, but for the irruption of the barbarians from the north, there is little doubt that the Latin would have continued unchanged during many ages after. In like manner, we may safely assert, that had not the Turks when they overran Greece, brought darkness and ignorance along with them, the Greek might have continued to this day much as it was in the days of Homer; since we see from that poet's works, and the comment-

aries of Eustathius upon them, that it remained for upwards of two thousand years, without undergoing any material alteration. Now, supposing that all mankind originally made use of the same language, and that no miraculous interference took place in order to confound it, how can we account for the first origin of those dialects which we find corrupting and introducing varieties into others. Mere change of place never causes men's language radically to change, unless it be aided by other causes; for we know that the Greeks of Asia Minor spoke a dialect of the same language which was spoken by the Greeks of Europe. The French of the Isle of Bourbon speak a dialect of the same language with the French of Paris; and the English of North America, employ few expressions which are not occasionally employed in the vicinity of London. There must, then, we apprehend, have been something more than a natural cause, for the diversity of speech which we find among men; and that cause is satisfactorily stated only in the Book of Genesis.

But though we thus express ourselves, it is very far from our intention to argue that Almighty God obliterated in a moment all trace of the original language from the minds of the Cushites, and substituted in its room other languages, differing radically and entirely from one another. The Hebrew text by no means asserts this, indeed it clearly implies that God interfered, not with the formation or groundwork of the language, but with the articulation of those who employed it. Improper articulation, however, renders a language quite as unintelligible to those by whom it is spoken correctly, as if the language itself were absolutely strange to them; and among persons of the violent and irascible temperaments which seem to have possessed the builders of Babel, such misunderstandings would soon lead to quarrels. Nay, we much doubt whether a band of English labourers, collected at random from Cornwall, Devonshire, York-

shire, Somersetshire and Kent, would either comprehend, or patiently bear with one another; though nobody can deny that such persons employ the same language, though they give to it a great variety of articulation. That changes in the pronunciation of the original language equal, or perhaps greater than this were produced by divine interference cannot, we think, be doubted; and, as such a commencement would gradually lead to greater and more important contrarieties, it sufficiently accounts for facts which, without it, must be absolutely inexplicable. But we are not called upon by Moses to believe more, far less to imagine that three, or four, or five original tongues were all made to start up, as it were, in a moment. On the contrary, as that author represents Abraham to have held converse, independently of any interpreter, with Chaldeans, Assyrians, Egyptians, and Canaanites, it is very evident that the language in use, throughout these countries at least, must have been radically the same; whilst the book of Job, if really written by that patriarch, distinctly proves that even so late as his time, the Arabic and Hebrew were but dialects one of the other. It is indeed possible that into the minds of the children of Magog, who seem to have been driven, by some divine impulse, far to the north, a totally new language may have been infused; and, if so, the fact sufficiently accounts for their remote wanderings; but it is abundantly evident that the different nations which were settled in the vicinity of the original seat of mankind, whether descended from Ham, Shem, or Japheth, all spoke languages, which, at an era far removed from the time of the dispersion, were essentially the same. On the whole, therefore, we are forced to conclude, that the Mosaic history deserves implicit credit, even on the ground of extreme probability; since it satisfactorily explains a phenomenon inexplicable without it, yet asserts no more than what the experience of every man may confirm.

CHAPTER VI.

Colonisation of the Earth.—Progress of Idolatry.—Traditions among different nations, of a flood.—Call of Terah.—His death.

A. M. 3318 to 3333.—B. C. 2093 to 2078.

OF the events which occurred between the dispersion and the call of Abraham, so little is said in Holy Scripture, that it appears as unnecessary as it would be uninteresting to attempt, in this place, minutely to describe them. Let it suffice to state, that whilst Moses contents himself with giving a brief genealogical table, by means of which the descent of the illustrious ancestor of the Jewish nation from Shem is made manifest, he says no more of other tribes than might tend to satisfy his countrymen, touching the beginning of the states with whom they were in the habit of coming into contact. Thus we are told that Terah, the father of Abraham, derived his origin from Noah, through Nahor, Serug, Reu, Peleg, Eber, Salah, Arphaxad and Shem. In like manner, though Japheth is represented to have been the father of seven sons, of the descendants of two of them only, namely, Gomer and Javan, is particular mention made; whilst out of the four sons specified as being born to Ham, the posterity of three are minutely and carefully traced. These three are Cush, the father of Nimrod, the great founder of the Babylonian empire, Mizraim the ancestor of the Egyptian kings, and progenitor of

the Philistines, and Canaan, the forefather of the Phœnicians, Hittites, Canaanites, Jebusites, Hivites, Amorites, and of all those tribes between whom and the Israelites, so many wars occurred. With respect to the other children of the then great heads of the new world, little further notice is taken of them, than may be included under the general declaration that “by them were the nations divided in the earth, after the flood.” With this obvious fact before us, we do not think it worth while to amuse the reader by transcribing the names of any one of the numerous places of migration which ingenious moderns have assigned as the homes of their remote ancestors. It is enough for us to be assured, that there exists so marked a similarity between the formation, customs, manners, and habits of mankind in general, however diversified they may be in more minute respects by climate and circumstances, as to leave no reasonable cause of doubt as to their common origin.

Of this any inquirer may easily satisfy himself, if he be content to examine man, not superficially, or with the eye of idle curiosity, but carefully, philosophically, and with strict attention to the geographical positions in which he may be found. Thus to trace a resemblance between the degraded Esquimaux, and the polished native of Vienna or Paris, is a task of no difficulty whatever, provided only we follow him through the Greenlander upwards; whilst the distinguishing marks which assign an Asiatic origin to all other American natives, from Cape Horn to the northern confines of Labrador, have been too accurately noted by Dr. Robertson, to be given in other words than his own: “There is,” says that elegant writer, “such a striking similitude in the form of their bodies and the qualities of their minds, that notwithstanding the diversities occasioned by the influence of climate, or unequal progress in improvement, we must pronounce them to be all descended from the same source. It is

remarkable that in every peculiarity, whether in their persons or dispositions, which characterizes the Americans, they have some resemblance to the rude tribes scattered over the north-east of Asia, but almost none to the natives settled in the northern extremities of Europe. We may, therefore, refer them to the former origin, and conclude that their Asiatic progenitors, having settled in those parts of America where the proximity of the two continents has been discovered, spread gradually over its various regions. This account of the progress of population in America coincides with the traditions of the Mexicans concerning their own origin, which, imperfect as they are, were preserved with more accuracy, and merit greater credit, than those of any other people in the new world. According to them their remote ancestors came from a remote country, situated to the north-west of Mexico. The Mexicans point out their various stations as they advanced from this, into the interior provinces; and it is precisely the same route which they must have held, if they had been emigrants from Asia. The Mexicans, in describing the appearance of their progenitors, their manners, and habits of life at that period, exactly delineate those of the rude Tartars, from whom I suppose them to have sprung."

We have taken the trouble to insert this long extract from Dr. Robertson, because we are aware that the condition in which America stood when discovered by Columbus and his followers, has been more frequently brought forward, as opposed to the Mosaic theory of population, than any other circumstance connected with the history of mankind. As to the varieties of complexion, form, costume, religion, and language, which occur in the old world, all these have long ceased to be regarded as other than the unavoidable effects of climate. It is well known, for example, that a continued residence under the tropics gradually converts the complexion from white to black, not in one

or two, or perhaps, ten generations, but certainly in the end. Of this truth the descendants from the Portuguese settlers in India present a memorable example, who, though they have tenaciously avoided all intermarriages with the people among whom they dwell, are not now to be distinguished, either in feature or colour, from their Asiatic neighbours. In like manner the woolly hair of the Negro may as surely be traced back to the operations of a particular temperature, as the change upon the coat of the dog from wool to hair, or from hair to wool, is attributable to the removal of the animal from one region to another. It seems, therefore, beyond dispute, that mankind have all originally sprung from the same stock, and as the information conveyed in the Bible on this head is in no respect in contradiction to reason or probability, it deserves to be received, independently of its divine authority, with unlimited respect.

But is it not true, that many nations, especially the Chinese, Egyptians, Chaldeans, and Hindoos, trace back their own history through thousands of years prior to the date of the Mosaic Deluge; and as these appear to have been at one period much more civilized than they are at present, why should their statements, resting as they do upon proofs of astronomical calculations be rejected? It cannot be denied that among the several nations alluded to, more especially among the Chaldeans, Egyptians, and Hindoos, the science of astronomy was very early cultivated, and that they carried it to a state of extraordinary perfection long before the natives of the west began to direct their attention to it at all. It is equally true, that they all lay claim, and have long laid claim, to an antiquity totally irreconcilable with the truth of the Mosaic history; but it is a gross mistake to suppose, that the justice of their claims has, in a single instance been substantiated, by any thing more trustworthy than their own bare assertions. With respect to the

Egyptians, no man, we will venture to say, can peruse the account given by Herodotus of their pretensions, and of the grounds on which they are supported, without being convinced that they are wholly fabulous; whilst of the Chaldeans it may suffice to observe, that though Alexander is reported to have discovered in Babylon observations for 1903 years previous to his arrival, the very commencement of their chronology has been proved to go no further back than the era of King Nabonassar, or 747 years before Christ. So is it also with respect to the Chinese, whose calculations carry on the very face of them proofs of their absolute contradiction to matters of fact; whilst the records of the Brahmins appear daily less and less valuable, as they come to be examined by competent judges: yet it is a remarkable fact, that these people should have all preserved a tradition of their original, so closely analogous to the details of Sacred History, as to leave no doubts upon the mind as to the source from which it came. Our limits will not permit us to offer even a brief outline of each of these; but the following, among the fragments from Berosus's History, preserved by Josephus, Tatianus, Eusebius, and others, will suffice to show how nearly the Chaldean tradition approached to the truth as recorded by Moses.

After an elaborate description of Babylonia, and a strange story of a certain creature, which in the first year of the world came out of the Red Sea, conversed familiarly with man, and taught them the knowledge of letters and several useful arts, Berosus proceeds to give a short account of ten kings who reigned in Chaldea before the flood; the first of whom, Alorus, corresponds exactly with Adam, as the last, Xesuthus, corresponds with Noah. Of this Xesuthus he delivers the following history: Chronus, or Saturn, appeared to him in a dream, and warning him that mankind should be destroyed by a flood, commanded him

to build a ship, into which, having previously stocked it with provisions, and introduced a certain quantity of fowls and fourfooted beasts, he, with his friends and nearest relatives should enter. Xesuthus did as he was ordered. He built a ship, the length of which was five furlongs, and the breadth two furlongs; he placed in it all the creatures and articles concerning which he had received directions, and finally embarked himself, with his wife, children, and friends. By and by the flood came; and when it began to abate, he let some birds fly, which finding no food, nor place of rest for their wings, returned again into the ship. After a few days delay he let the birds go again, which came back with their feet darkened with mud; but when for the third time he dismissed them, they never returned. By this means he gathered, that the earth was re-appearing above the waters, and when he took down some planks from the ship he discovered that it rested upon a mountain." We need not point out how perfectly this accords with the history of Noah's proceedings, as described by Moses, nor dwell upon the confirmation which it gives, were such wanting, to the credibility of the inspired writer.

Somewhat similar is the tradition that prevails in China touching the first origin of the sublime empire. The Chinese have their ten *Ki*, or ages, or periods, corresponding with the ten generations of mankind before the flood. After which came Fohi, whom the best authorities have pronounced to be Noah, whilst the fourth in succession from him, who is represented as the corrupter of the ancient religion, and the establisher of idolatry, clearly corresponds with the character given by Moses of Nimrod. No doubt there is a great deal of obscurity in these analogies, though we believe them to be substantially correct; but that the pretensions of the Chinese to great antiquity are absolutely inadmissible, a bare statement of facts will serve to prove. The Chinese lay claim to have subsisted as a separate state for

a period which extends backwards, according to some traditions, to three, according to others, to nine millions of years before the Christian era; whilst Confucius, the oldest of their historians, flourished so lately as 479 years prior to the birth of Christ.

With respect to the Hindoos, it may be sufficient to observe, that they distinguish the present age of the world into four grand periods, denominated yugs. The first, or Satya-yug, comprehends a period of no less than 1,728,000 years; the second, or Treta-yug, 1,296,000; the third, or Dwapar, 864,000; and the fourth, or Cali-yug, shall extend to 423,000. Of these, the three first are expired, and in the year 1817 of the Christian era, 4911 of the last. From the commencement of the Satya-yug, therefore, to the year 1817, is comprehended a space of 3,892,911 years. We need not pause to explain how perfectly inconsistent with all credibility is such a theory as this, more especially when we find it supporting the idea, that one sovereign only filled the throne during the whole of the first yug; but it may be observed, that between the history of that sovereign and the Mosaic account of Noah, there is even a closer similarity than prevails between the latter and Berosus's account of Xesuthus. "It is related in the Padina Puran,"* says Mr. Welford, "that Satyarota, whose miraculous preservation from a general deluge is told at length in the Mataya, had three sons, the eldest of whom was called Jyapeti, or lord of the earth. The others were Charma and Sharma, which last are in the vulgar dialects usually pronounced Cham and Sham; so we frequently hear Kishna for Chushna. The royal patriarch, for such is his character in the Purans, was particularly fond of Jyapeti, to whom he gave all the regions to the north of the Hemalaya, in the snowy mountains, which extend from sea to sea, and of which

* Asiatic Researches, iii. 312, 313.

Caucasus is a part. To Sharma he allotted the countries to the south of those mountains; but he cursed Charma, because when the old monarch was accidentally inebriated with a strong liquor made of fermented ice, Charma laughed; and it was in consequence of his father's imprecations that he became a slave to the slaves of his brothers." All this is curious enough, nor is it less remarkable, that whilst the Hindoos pretend to describe with accuracy the principal events which befell, from the commencement of the Satya-yug down to the 446th year before Christ, their system of chronology then totally ceases. This appears to be quite at variance with the ordinary course of things, or to use the language of an eminent historian,* "It is a most suspicious circumstance, in the pretended records of a nation, when we find positive statements for a regular and immense series of years in the remote abyss of time, but are entirely deserted by them, when we descend to ages more nearly approaching our own. Where annals are real, they become circumstantial in proportion as they are recent; where fable stands in the place of fact, the times over which the memory has any influence are rejected, and the imagination rests in those in which it is unrestrained." On the whole, therefore, we cannot hesitate in believing with the author just quoted, "that there is nothing more remarkable in the traditions of nations, than their agreement respecting the origin of the present inhabitants of the globe;" whilst Mr. Bryant, Sir William Jones, and other eminent inquirers, have distinctly proved, "that the account of the Deluge in the religious books of the Jews, must be taken as the archetype of the whole."

We have said that it is not our design, on the authority of modern writers, to supply the blank which Moses has left in the history of mankind, however ample the

* Mr. Mill, whose *History of India* is an extremely valuable work.

materials within our reach may be for the purpose. Let it suffice to state, that the eight generations which occurred between the Deluge and the birth of Terah, comprehended, according to the accurate calculations of Dr. Hales, nearly nine centuries; and that during that lengthened period mankind greatly increased in numbers, which spread themselves, gradually but surely, over a large surface of the earth. How this was effected it is not difficult to conceive. As one region or district became over populous, the more adventurous of its inhabitants would form themselves into bands, and go forth under some favourite leader, to seek for new settlements; till at last the whole of the country round about the original seat of man, became fully, if not densely peopled. We need scarcely observe that each of these leaders, as soon as he abandoned the ancient territories, would assume to himself and obtain from his followers the title of king, which seems originally to have been enjoyed, as well as the priestly office, by every head of a family. Hence the multitude of kings which are represented as flourishing in the days of Abraham, and even of Joshua, when each town and city with a small district attached, had its independent sovereign; of whose power in the field, or influence in the affairs of other states it would be unfair to form any idea, by comparing them with the sovereigns of modern Europe, or the Cyruses and Nebuchadnezzars of old.

Whilst this gradual extension of the human race went on, vice, as had been the case in the ages before the flood, kept steady pace with it. It has already been stated, that as long as Noah and his sons lived, and the tradition of the Deluge continued fresh in their minds, men could hardly run into the excess of folly and crime in which we find them afterwards involved; but these patriarchs were scarcely called to their fathers ere human perverseness began to exhibit itself, in a form to which,

when unaided by divine revelation, it appears to be peculiarly prone. The worship of the true God became corrupted and debased by the substitution, in the room of Jehovah, of tutelary deities, till at last idolatry, with its concomitants, the grossest immorality and cruelty overspread the world like a pestilence.

We have already given it as our opinion that this grievous malady took its rise in Chaldea, and that Nimrod, the impious founder of Babel, was its author. In these respects, universal tradition, as well as the best writers of ancient and modern times, are agreed; whilst the worship of the heavenly bodies is generally admitted to have been the first species of idolatry introduced among men. It does not appear, however, that all the tribes became equally and simultaneously infected with that crime. As it began with the Cushites, of the family of Ham, so probably was it for a time confined to them and their more immediate neighbours; at least we find that even in Abraham's day, neither Melchizedek, the king of Salem, nor yet Abimelech, king of Gerar, worshipped any other besides Jehovah; whilst Job, the Arabian, and Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, at a later period still, continued in this respect absolutely pure. But the impulse being once given, it is easy to explain how its progress would be both sure and rapid, till in the end nothing short of a direct and immediate interference of the Almighty sufficed to hinder it from destroying all remnant of the truth.

There appears to be good ground for believing, that with the use of letters, as well as with most other arts and sciences, the antediluvians were well acquainted; and that they were conveyed by Noah and the survivors from the great Deluge, to the new world. It has, indeed, been ably argued, that the Mosaic account of transactions previous to the flood, was compiled from certain documents preserved

by the family of Noah in the ark; and, if the case be so, it is difficult to imagine, that the immediate descendants of that family could be illiterate, or, in the proper sense of the term, barbarous. As men departed, however, in small tribes from their common centre, and settled themselves in the midst of dreary wastes, or gloomy forests, they would every day find less and less leisure for the cultivation of literature and science; and in a few generations would unavoidably become too much sunk to attribute to such pursuits any value. Exactly in the same ratio would increase their inability to comprehend the idea of a Being every where present, yet himself invisible; and the tradition that some such being existed would remain in full force, long after they had ceased to be aware whence it originated. Such a state of things would naturally lead to the substitution of some visible symbol, as the sun, the moon, and the planets; next would follow the deification of deceased benefactors, of men who had performed great exploits, or enjoyed a brilliant reputation during their lives, in honour of whom statues may have been erected; and last of all would arise the practice of worshipping these statues themselves as the very gods whom they were originally intended to represent. As to the peculiar superstition of the Egyptians, the worship of the brute creation, that has been very fully and satisfactorily accounted for by Warburton, in the fourth book of his *Divine Legation*. It was unquestionably occasioned by the employing, in hieroglyphic writings, the figures of different animals, to denote the attributes of their different gods, or the different attributes of the true God; for when the meaning of the hieroglyphic was forgotten, the grovelling minds of those who had long treated it with reverence continued to do so still, and, not knowing the import which it had among their forefathers, considered it as the likeness of some unseen god. Hence it seems to be, that the graven images

of animals were worshipped long before the animals themselves, as is completely proved by the idolatrous erection of the golden calf by the Israelites at Mount Sinai. That people possessed numerous herds of cattle; and had they been accustomed, with their Egyptian ancestors, to worship the living animal, their women would not have been called upon to give up their earrings, for the purpose of forming an inanimate emblem of the gods "which brought them out of Egypt."

Such was the state of the world, or at least into this state it was rapidly falling, at the period when Abram, the illustrious ancestor of the Jewish nation, was born. Though placed first in order in the Book of Genesis, we have the best authority for asserting that he was the youngest son of Terah, the ninth in descent from Shem, because we find that his wife Sarai, who was the daughter of his brother Haran, was his junior by ten years only; and because Lot, the son of Haran, appears to have been at least coeval with Abram. Besides Abraham and Haran, the latter of whom died before his father, Terah had a third son named Nahor, who married Milcah, likewise a daughter of Haran, though senior to Sarai. Terah's family, thus circumstanced, dwelt for some time at Uz, a city of Chaldea; the exact geographical situation of which, as it is nowhere accurately laid down, it appears both vain and unnecessary to determine. In Uz, as in all other towns and cities of Chaldea, the Zabian idolatry was practised; and there is a tradition very prevalent in the east, that not only Terah, but Abram himself, was in his youth a priest of the Sun. For the truth of this rumour we cannot pretend to vouch, though there are several circumstances in the history of Terah's descendants which appear to sanction it; but it is certain, that God having determined to select this family out of mankind, for the purposes of establishing with them his church, and bringing, through them, the Messiah into the world, adopted the only plan which

appears at all reconcileable at once with divine wisdom, and the liberty of the human will. He commanded Terah, either in a vision by night, or by some other means not to be mistaken, to quit his polluted country; and the patriarch, probably cured by that vision of his idolatrous propensities, hesitated not to obey. Leaving Nahor behind, as is plausibly enough imagined, to superintend, or rather to wind up his affairs, he took with him his son Abram, and his grandson Lot, with Sarai, the wife of the former, and set out with an intention of penetrating into the land of Canaan; but falling sick by the way, at a place called Haran, he was compelled to halt, and there, after a brief sojourn, he died.

This last event befell, according to Dr. Hales, in the year of the world 3318, just one thousand and sixty years after the Deluge, and two thousand and ninety-three before Christ.

CHAPTER VII.

Abram's History continued.—His travels.—Birth of Ishmael.—Destruction of Sodom.—Birth of Isaac.—Ishmael dismissed.—Sacrifice of Isaac.—His marriage.—Death of Sarah and Abraham.—Objections noticed and answered.

A. M. 3333 to 3398.—B. C. 2078 to 2013.

How long Abram sojourned at Haran after the decease of his father, we possess no means of ascertaining; but we are told that God renewed the injunction in his case, which he had formerly given in the case of Terah, by commanding him to abandon Haran, and to continue his journey to a land which should be divinely pointed out to him. Along with this command, came an assurance, that God would bless, protect, and multiply his posterity in a wonderful manner, whilst the gracious promise which had previously been made, first to Adam, and afterwards to Noah, was distinctly and explicitly renewed to Abraham. "I will bless them that bless thee," said Jehovah, "and curse him that curseth thee; and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." This was the more gratifying to Abram, because as yet no child had been born to him, though he himself was seventy-five, and his wife sixty-five years of age; and in proportion as the prospect of a family became daily more remote, the desire to possess one, as usually occurs, had strengthened. That the latter clause, in the above declaration, contains an explicit prophecy of the Messiah, no divine has ever called in question, though,

whether it was as yet fully understood by Abram, is not quite so evident. Be this, however, as it may, the patriarch made no delay in obeying God. He took with him his wife, his nephew, their servants, cattle, and goods, and abandoning Haran, proceeded at once towards the land of Canaan, where his first halting-place was near the plain of Moreh, not far from the city of Sichem. Here he built an altar to God, and offered to him the supplications and prayers of a grateful heart; and here he was again favoured with fresh assurances of God's favour, and fresh promises of prosperity to himself and his family.

From Sichem Abram removed into the mountainous district which lies between Beth-el and Hai, where, as his ordinary custom was, he again erected an altar; but in his progress further south, he was arrested by a famine, which at that time grievously oppressed the whole country. Under these circumstances, he determined to visit Egypt, attracted, as Josephus says, by a desire to converse with the priests, but more probably incited to the movement by rumours of its fertility; yet the movement was not made without considerable apprehension that it might endanger, if not his life, at all events his domestic peace. Sarai, it appears, was an extremely beautiful woman, a quality which her advanced age had not impaired; and Abram, apprehensive that her charms would attract the notice of the Egyptians, to his own hurt, fell upon a device to obviate its consequences, for which no excuse is to be made. He persuaded Sarai to deny that she was his wife, and to represent herself as his sister, "that it might be well with him for her sake; and that his soul might live because of her."

We are not ignorant that of this, and of a similar proceeding in the afterlife of the patriarch, some use has been made by those who read the Scriptures only for the purpose of detecting in them errors; whilst a hardly more justifiable course has been pursued regard-

ing it, by such as are unwilling to see a fault in the most illustrious of all the Scripture characters. Now the truth appears to be, not only that Moses never designed to represent Abram as an absolutely perfect being, but that he records this undeniable act of folly, to call it by no harsher term, because he is too faithful a chronicler to conceal the weaknesses of his hero. It was, doubtless, extremely foolish in Abram to suppose, that the Deity, who had already shown so great a partiality towards him, would fail to carry him safely through the dangers which might attend him in Egypt; whilst there was still less excuse for the weakness which could tempt him to seek for personal security in the practice of falsehood, or, at best, of deceit and guile. Yet such are the facts recorded in Holy Writ; and however they may weigh against the virtue or good sense of Abram, they are to be admitted. On the other hand, it is the height of absurdity to contend, that because Abram's faith failed him in two memorable instances, he was therefore unworthy of the favour which God showed towards him, and the blessings which he received. Abram, like other characters in history, can be justly compared only with the men with whom he was contemporary; and, if we except Melchizedek, he was undeniably the most faithful, the most upright, the most religious, and the most just of all the persons with whom he came into contact. Besides, as Abram was chosen, not for his own sake, but to serve a particular purpose, having reference to the benefit of all mankind, and and not to be accomplished till after many generations, a few blemishes in his moral character, would not, in any respect, affect the end of his adoption; which as it could be served only by one, out of the millions of men then alive, might just as well be served by Abram, as by any other person.

The dangers which Abram had foreseen, previous to his entrance into Egypt, soon began to environ him

after he crossed the border. The extreme beauty of his wife became a topic of conversation in all circles, and was speedily made known to the king, who immediately caused the woman to be removed into his harem, for the purpose of adding her to his list of concubines. That this was done without any design on Pharaoh's part to injure Abram is proved by the circumstance that "he entreated the patriarch well for her sake, giving him sheep, and oxen, and asses, and men-servants, and maid-servants, and she-asses and camels, as the dowery of his sister." Yet Abram saw, when too late, that by acting deceitfully he had fallen into the very snare which it was his object to avoid. God, however, whom he had presumed to distrust, did not forsake his servant. He caused a heavy plague to fall upon Pharaoh and his house, so peculiar in its nature, as to point at once to the circumstances which had produced it; and the king discovering that Sarai was the wife, not the sister of the stranger, made haste to remedy the fault which he he was preparing to commit. He sent for Abram, gently rebuked him for his conduct, and having restored to him his wife exactly as he had taken her, desired that a free passage should be granted to him beyond the boundary-line of his kingdom.

These matters were no sooner adjusted, than Abram, having heard that the famine was ceased in Canaan, set forth out of Egypt, and returned to his former settlement between Beth-el and Hai. Up to this moment Abram and Lot had lived together; but now their flocks were so greatly multiplied, and their followers so much increased in number, that it was found impossible, without trenching upon the possessions of the inhabitants of the country, to keep the two establishments any longer together. Some differences, likewise, having arisen between the herdsmen respecting a well, of all things the most valuable in eastern countries, the two patriarchs came to the wise determination of

separating; and as this was done in the most perfect good humour, Abram requested that Lot would make choice of his new settlement. In consequence of this arrangement, Lot struck off towards the east, being attracted thither by the remarkable fertility of the valley of the Jordan, whilst Abram continued to inhabit the land of Canaan, and pitched his tent toward Sodom. There he was again favoured by a Divine vision, which promising that the whole of the region round about should in due time become the possession of his children, required him to make a sort of tour or journey throughout it, in obedience to which he once more "removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron."

Abram's first proceeding here was, as it had been elsewhere, to build an altar unto the Lord; after which he entered into an alliance or bond of friendship with Mamre, Aner, and Eshcol, three of the kings or princes of the country. Why this was done we are not told; though we may suppose it to have been brought about, if not by a direct admonition, at all events by the especial guidance of the Most High; but whether this was the case or not, one fact appears undeniable, that it proved in the issue to be attended with the happiest results both to Abram and to his kinsman.

It happened about this time that five petty princes, of whom the King of Sodom was one, rebelled against Chedorlaomer, king of Elam, who for several years had held them tributary and dependant. He marched against them with a numerous army, and defeating them in a great battle fought in the valley of Sodom, put numbers to the sword, and compelled the rest to take refuge in the mountains. Chedorlaomer immediately proceeded to sack and plunder the cities, carrying away captive all whom he found in them; and as Lot dwelt at this time in the city of Sodom, he shared the fate of his fellow-countrymen. No great while elapsed, however, ere Abram was

made aware of the calamity which had befallen his friend and relative. He lost no time in calling upon his allies to assist him with troops; and arming his own servants to the number of three hundred and eighteen, he set out in rapid pursuit of the victorious Elamites. These he overtook, after a march of nearly seventy leagues, and attacking them at night in several quarters, he threw them into such confusion, that they fled without striking a blow, leaving all their booty behind them.

Returning in triumph, and loaded with spoil, Abram was met by the king of Sodom, who congratulated him on his success; and freely giving up to him all the property, requested only that his subjects might be set free. But Abram was too generous to take advantage of the weakness of one whom he had voluntarily assisted. He refused to retain a single article of the plunder which had been secured, beyond what would recompense his allies for the expense and trouble which they had undergone, and cheerfully restored not his subjects only, but his goods and treasures to the king. Nor did his virtue end here. When Melchizedek, king of Salem, had entertained him and his followers, and blessed them in the name of Jehovah, whose priest he was, Abram, as a mark of reverence to the Deity, no less than of respect towards the man, presented him with a tenth part of the spoil which he had taken. This done, he dismissed the soldiers whom his confederates had lent him, and retired with his own people to his abode in Mamre.

He had not long resumed his ordinary occupations, when it pleased God again to cheer him with fresh and more remarkable assurances of his favour and protection. With these, as well as with the promises which had preceded them, Abram was of course greatly delighted; but having no children of his own, and seeing no probability that any would now be granted to him, he began to inquire of God whether the blessing would be fulfilled through Elie-

zer, the steward of his house. It was now that God explicitly informed him that his heir should be the fruit of his own body; and desiring him to look up into the skies, assured him, that as the stars were numberless, so should his offspring be. We are distinctly assured that "Abraham believed God, and that God imputed it to him for righteousness:" yet in the spirit of the age in which he lived, he requested of God some sign by which his faith, should it at any time become weak, might be strengthened. God did not refuse to comply with his wish; a solemn sacrifice being offered, and Abram having sworn steady obedience to the Divine will, God caused a deep sleep to come over him, during which a vision passed by him, and revealed that he must not look for an immediate accomplishment of the prediction, for that though he himself should return to his fathers in peace, his posterity must suffer oppression during a period of four hundred years. At the end of that time, however, God promised to judge the nation that afflicted them, and that finally he would bestow upon them the whole of those regions in which Abram was a stranger. This was no sooner said than darkness closed in, and an awful manifestation of the Divine presence was afforded. A smoking furnace and a burning lamp were seen to pass between the divided victims, which they consumed in testimony that God's part of the covenant was ratified.

During ten long years Sarai had vainly looked for the performance of God's promise, and judging now that the seed was to come of some other stock besides hers, she requested that her husband would accept at her hands, as a concubine or secondary wife, her own maid, Hagar. It is to be observed here, that the practice of polygamy seems to have been universally prevalent in ancient times, without any mark of reprobation being set upon it by the Most High. Why that was permitted in the patriarchal ages, which is so strictly

forbidden now, it is, perhaps, needless to inquire; but that the case was so, Scripture abundantly assures us. There are indeed travellers, among others Mr. Bruce, who assert, that nature itself points out the lawfulness of the custom in eastern countries, by producing females in the proportion of two or three to one male, and if such be the case now, we are fully justified in supposing that at least an equal provision would be made in the infancy of the world for an increase of population. But whatever force may be allowed to this argument, it is sufficient for us to know, that God, in all his dealings with mankind, has acted in strict accordance with their ability to receive his dispensations; and that the standard of morals as well as of faith has become gradually more and more perfect, in proportion as men have become more civilized, and hence better able to comprehend the advantages arising out of it. Thus as it remained for Christianity to convey to man just notions of the Deity, and of his own condition as a religious and accountable being, so was the charge devolved upon the great Founder of that religion to place every social and moral duty upon its proper basis; and the sacred obligation of the marriage tie received among others from his hand, and from his alone, the equitable and highly beneficial character which it now bears.

The sacred historian informs us, that Abram, having acceded to Sarai's proposal, took Hagar to wife, and that the latter receiving assurances that in due time she would become a mother, exhibited much insolence in her manner towards her mistress. This naturally exciting the indignation of Sarai, she complained to her husband of the matter, from whom she obtained permission to act in this case as her own inclination might dictate. Like most people labouring under violent excitement, Sarai seems to have treated her ungrateful domestic with perhaps undue severity. The consequence was, that Hagar, impatient of the mortifications

that were heaped upon her, fled from the house, but being found by an angel when resting beside a fountain in the desert, she was desired to return, and conduct herself henceforth with greater modesty. It was, moreover, foretold to her, that the son, of whom she should shortly be delivered, would become a distinguished character, and the head of a numerous and warlike race; and the name of Ishmael was in commemoration of God's goodness towards her, appointed to be given him. Hagar, comforted by these assurances, measured back her steps to Abram's dwelling, where in due time she brought forth the child. From the date of this occurrence, which befell in the eighty-sixth year of Abram's life, during a space of thirteen years, nothing is recorded by Moses of the proceedings or fortunes of the patriarch. We are therefore left to believe, that he dwelt in peace and quiet at Mamre, pleasing himself in all probability with visions of Ishmael's future greatness; but at the end of that period another visitation more remarkable than all the rest was vouchsafed to him; and his attention was directed to the true stock, from which the promised blessing was to come. It was then that God distinctly assured him, that from the once barren Sarai the Messiah should spring; changed the patriarch's name of Abram to Abraham, that of Sarai to Sarah, and instituted, under a severe penalty, the rite of circumcision, whilst he at the same time so far granted Abraham's petition in favour of Ishmael, as to promise that he should be ancestor of twelve princes. Finally, Abraham was directed, in testimony of the solemn promise thus renewed, to call his child, when born of Sarah, by the name of Isaac, a word which signifies in the original Hebrew, *laughter*, or rather, *he or she shall laugh*.

Abraham was not backward in obeying the command of God, by undergoing himself, and causing every male in his household, from eight days old and upwards, to

undergo the painful rite of circumcision. This was hardly done, and the people recovered from its effects, when, as he was sitting one day at the door of his tent, he saw three persons approach, whom, mistaking them for ordinary travellers, he invited to enter and refresh themselves. The strangers accepted of his hospitality, and being sumptuously entertained under the shade of a spreading oak, they speedily gave him to understand that they were of an order superior to men. They renewed the promise which God had so lately made, touching Sarah, reproved Sarah for treating the declaration with contempt, and then rising from the ground pursued their journey in the direction of Sodom. But even with this, their condescension ended not. One more mighty than his companions, whom the ablest commentators have held to be the Son of God himself in a human form, lagged behind the rest, and informed Abraham of the terrible design which they were about to execute. This was no other than the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, whose guilt had risen to a fearful height; indeed, so flagrant was the case, that when Abraham ventured to intercede in favour of the devoted cities, he was distinctly given to understand, that should there be found so many as ten righteous persons there, for their sakes the entire population would be spared.

In the mean while the other angels pursued their journey, and arriving at Sodom, found Lot sitting in the gate. It is scarcely necessary to observe, that in ancient times no virtue ranked higher than hospitality, which was the more valuable, because of the total absence of inns, or houses of public entertainment, in the eastern countries. Lot was not deficient in this respect; he entreated the men to take up their abode with him that night, and after some little demur, they all entered his house. They had scarcely done so, when the infamous men of the city beset Lot's house, demanding that the strangers might be handed

over to them for the vilest purposes. Like a good man and an upright host, Lot remonstrated against the wickedness of their proceedings; and became so heated at last as to declare, that he would rather sacrifice the honour of his virgin daughters, than comply with their wishes; but his remonstrances were useless. The men pressed upon him, upbraiding him with his insolence, because that he, a mere sojourner, had presumed to question the propriety of their conduct; till the strangers [alarmed for his personal safety thrust out their hands, and drew him within the house. They then shut the door, smote the crowd with a confusion of vision, which hindered them from distinguishing one object from another, and proceeded to explain to Lot the purpose for which they had obtruded into this den of pollution: after which, they advised him to collect all his friends and relatives together, and flee without delay from a place devoted to destruction. Lot lost no time in addressing himself to the only individuals with whom he maintained any intimacy, two men to whom his daughters were betrothed, but these regarding the old man as insane, laughed at his warning. Thus passed during the night; and in the morning the angels perceiving him to linger, urged upon him the necessity of immediate flight, if he hoped to escape the general destruction. Thus stimulated, Lot took with him his wife and two daughters, whom the angels led without the town, and after receiving strict injunctions on no account to loiter by the way, the whole party fled towards a small village called Zoar. And time it was to fly; for already had that tremendous shower of fire begun to fall, which speedily reduced Sodom to a heap of ruins, and converted the country round from a valley of singular fertility into a desolate dreary waste. But the party made not good their escape as they set out. Lot's wife lagging behind, probably from a disinclination to believe that the threat of the angels would be fulfilled, was overtaken by the

dreadful shower; and, being incrustated in a coat of burning sulphur, she became, as the language of Scripture expresses it, "a pillar of salt."

Though Lot had obtained, not without some difficulty, permission to seek a refuge in Zoar, its proximity to the terrible scene which now opened upon his eyes alarmed him so much, that he fled with his daughters to the mountains, and took up his abode in a cave. That cave was the scene of a transaction of which it is unnecessary here to give any detailed account. Let it suffice to state, that Lot's daughters believing that the whole world had perished by fire, and that they and their father were alone left alive, conceived it their duty to hinder the human species from becoming utterly extinct. With this view, and from no unworthy or sinful disposition, they devised a scheme which in the instances of both became successful, and they each produced a son, in the natural course of events, of whom Lot was the father. These were Moab and Ammon, the great ancestors of the Moabites and Ammonites, between whom and the children of Israel, so many feuds afterwards arose.

In the mean time, Abraham, probably annoyed by the stench which came up from the vale of Siddim, removed his tent to a place called Beer-sheba, situated between Kadesh and Shur, and not far from Gerar, a city of the Philistines. There a similar event occurred, attended by precisely similar consequences, to that which many years before had taken place in Egypt. Abraham again persuaded his wife to assume the style of his sister; she was again carried into the harem of Abimelech, and again through a distinct interference of Divine power, restored to her husband. We will not pause to discuss points which we have already noticed at sufficient length, but content ourselves by admitting, that now, as previously, Abraham exhibited a strange distrustfulness in the protecting power of God; and that his vindication of himself, when re-

proved by Abimelech, is by no means creditable to his ingenuousness.

But the time was now come when God's gracious promise was destined to receive its accomplishment. Sarah, though in the ninetieth year of her age, was delivered of a son, whom according to Divine instructions, his parents named Isaac, and whom they circumcised, as they had circumcised others, the eighth day after his birth. The boy grew and flourished, and at the period of his weaning, which appears to have taken place among the Hebrews when a child attained to its third year, Abraham gave a solemn feast to his household; attended, as such feasts were in those days, by circumstances of peculiar ceremony. Whilst this was going on, Sarah saw that Hagar and Ishmael, jealous of the newly-found heir, behaved disrespectfully towards him. She complained of this to Abraham, and urged that they should be dismissed; but Abraham loved his son Ishmael, and would not consent to this measure till he had consulted God. Being directed, however, by the Almighty, "to hearken unto the voice of Sarah," he called Hagar and Ishmael to him early in the morning, and supplying them with provisions and water, adequate to their consumption whilst crossing the desert, he solemnly dismissed them.

It was doubtless the design of Hagar, in this emergency, to return into her native country, Egypt; but the travellers had scarcely entered upon the Great Desert, when they lost their way, and continued to wander about till a considerable part of the provisions, and the whole supply of water, was expended. In this distress, they both cried to God for help, who sent an angel to encourage them, and to point out a fountain, from which their more pressing and immediate necessities were supplied. Nor did God desert them ever after. They removed into the wilderness of Paran, where they settled, Ishmael taking an Egyptian to wife; from which union one of the most remarkable among

the tribes of men, the Arabs of the Desert are descended.

Whilst Hagar and Ishmael were thus conducting themselves, Abraham had entered into a more intimate alliance with Abimelech, and dwelt many days peaceably and piously in the land of the Philistines. But a great trial of his faith, under which much important knowledge lies concealed, was yet to be undergone. It pleased God, who had directed that Ishmael should be sent away, because in Isaac the patriarch's seed were to be called, to require that Abraham should offer up that very Isaac as a burnt-sacrifice to himself. This was, indeed, a tremendous requisition; but the patriarch, whose trust in God seems to have grown daily more and more steadfast, hesitated not a moment in obeying it. Without a murmur, or sentence of exhortation, he took with him Isaac, a few servants, and the instruments proper for a sacrifice, and set out upon a journey, which, after lasting three days, conducted him to Mount Moriah, which God chose as the scene of the great drama.

Arrived at the foot of this mountain, Abraham directed his servants to halt with the ass, whilst he himself, laying the wood ready cloven upon the shoulders of Isaac, began to ascend. As they proceeded on their way, Isaac not unnaturally inquired, where the animal was which they were about to offer; to which Abraham answered by the touching declaration, that "God would provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering." He then proceeded, doubtless not without extreme agitation, to explain the dreadful necessity which had been imposed upon him. But he spoke to one not less pious or virtuous than himself. Isaac cheerfully consented to undergo the fate which God appeared to have allotted him, and submitted without a struggle, to be bound and laid upon the wood.

So far matters had proceeded, and Abraham had already grasped the knife to slay his son, when there

came a voice from the clouds, which had been too often heard not to be immediately recognised; and the patriarch was made happy by the declaration, that God never designed to require so terrible a proof of faithfulness at his hands. At the same moment a ram was discerned, caught by its horns in the thicket, which Abraham was directed to offer up instead of his son; and then was the great design of God made more than ever manifest to the eye of the wondering patriarch. This done, Abraham and Isaac returned to their servants, whom they had left at the bottom of the hill, and the whole party forthwith directed their steps back to Beer-sheba.

Of the remainder of Abraham's history, a few words will suffice to exhibit a sufficiently distinct outline. Sarah, his wife, died in the hundred and twenty-seventh year of her age, and he buried her in a cave in the midst of a field which he had purchased at Kirjath-arba, afterwards called Hebron, in the country of Canaan. His next measure was to seek a wife for his son Isaac, among their own relatives; on which errand he despatched his servant Eliezer, to Haran; when divine Providence pointed out to him a fitting bride for his young master, in the person of Rachel, the daughter of Laban. The arrangement was speedily made, and Rachel accompanying him back, was received by Isaac as a gift from Heaven; indeed, such was her beauty, and so numerous her good qualities, that to her the pious patriarch continued faithful during the whole of his life.

Soon after this Abraham took another wife, by name Keturah, by whom he had six sons; but, lest they should interfere with Isaac in his inheritance of Canaan, he portioned them off as they grew up, and sent them away to seek their fortunes in the east. These all became in time the heads of different nations, whose traces are discoverable both in sacred and profane history, and whose territories lay in Arabia, and Syria,

and the provinces and districts near. Finally, the same event befell to Abraham which has befallen, and shall befall, to all. He died, having attained to the great age of one hundred and seventy-five years, and was buried in the cave of Machpelah, beside his beloved Sarah.

There are few events recorded in the preceding pages which, if due attention be paid to the state of society in the patriarchal ages, and the great design of God in his election of the house of Abraham, will be found capable of exciting, in the breast of a reflecting man, either doubt or uneasiness. The conduct of Abraham in his denial of the true connexion which subsisted between Sarah and himself, has been already noticed in the only way in which it appears capable of being noticed; whilst the marriage of the patriarch with Hagar, his wife being yet alive, has been attributed to its true motive, as well as to the customs of the times. But the purposed sacrifice of Isaac is a matter so important, and it has so frequently been objected to as unworthy of the divine nature, that we consider ourselves bound to employ a few words for the purpose of rightly explaining it.

Without laying too much stress upon the undoubted fact, that God, in his character of universal Creator, may deal with his creatures as he chooses; or the fact, equally undeniable, that to a command divinely given, all other obligations necessarily yield, it appears to us that the matter under consideration has been considered difficult of belief, chiefly from a want of adequate regard to the purposes which it was intended to serve. It has generally been held, that the command to offer up his only son was imposed upon Abraham merely as a trial of that patriarch's faith; and it has been added, that seeing the deed was not executed, there is nothing unworthy of the divine goodness in having instituted such a trial. All this may be, and doubtless is, very true; but, as Bishop Warburton has well observed, it

hardly accounts for a transaction so diametrically opposed to the Divine proceedings generally. That illustrious divine has accordingly looked further than most men, perhaps, are capable of looking; and he has come to the conclusion, that the command was imposed upon Abraham, chiefly with a design of enabling him to *see* and *feel* by what means all the families of the earth were to be blessed in him.

The learned prelate founds his theory upon that passage of the Gospel by St. John, in which Jesus says to the unbelieving Jews, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it and was glad." It is evident, he observes, from the reply made by the Jews to this assertion, that they understood the expression to *see*, in its most literal sense; while it is equally evident, that when they objected to the possibility of a man, not yet fifty years old, having *seen* Abraham, our Lord did not correct them in the notion which they had formed as to *seeing*. It was not, however, *himself personally*, that our Saviour asserted that Abraham rejoiced to see, but his day; by which cannot be meant the period of his sojourn upon earth, but the circumstance in his life which was of the highest importance, and mainly characteristic of his office as the Redeemer. That the term will admit of this interpretation is indubitable, from the frequent use made, in a similar sense, of the word *hour*. Thus, when our Lord repeatedly says, "My hour is not yet come"—"the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners:" when he prayed that "if it were possible the hour might pass from him:" where it is said, that "no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come:" and again, "that the hour was come when the Son of Man should be glorified." In all these instances it is evident that the word does not signify a mere portion of time, from which no one can be saved by its passing from him; but some particular circumstance or cir-

cumstances in his life, which were peculiar to him as the Redeemer. The peculiar circumstance, however, which constituted Jesus the Redeemer of the world, was the laying down of his life, that "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ should all be made alive." And this it was which Abraham must have rejoiced to see, and which seeing he was glad. "But," continues the bishop, "there is nothing recorded of Abraham in the Old Testament, from which it could be inferred that he saw Christ's day in this sense, if he did not *see* and *feel* it in the command to sacrifice his only son."

"When we take a view of Abraham's history, we see how all God's revelations to him, to this last, ultimately related to that mystic fundamental promise made to him in his first vocation, that "in him should all the families of the earth be blessed." God opens the scheme of his dispensations by exact and regular steps; and the revelations follow one another gradually and in order. Abraham is first commanded to go into a land which should be shown to him; then that land, to be possessed by his numerous posterity, is exhibited before him; its distinct boundaries are afterwards marked out. He is next assured, while yet childless, that his posterity, to which so much was promised, should not be from an adopted son, but from one out of his own loins. He is then told, that his son should be born of Sarah, which is followed by a formal execution of the COVENANT, confirmed by the seat of circumcision. After all this, the birth of Isaac is predicted; who, being born at the appointed time, Ishmael is ordered to be sent away, to design with more certainty the succession of the son of Sarah. Thus we see a gradual opening and fit preparative for some further revelation, which, in pursuance of this regular scheme of progressive dispensations, could be no other than that of the REDEMPTION OF MANKIND BY THE MESSIAH, the completion of the whole economy of grace, as it is

the only explanation of his first and fundamental promise, that "in Abraham should all the families of the earth be blessed."

It can scarcely be doubted that Abraham was exceedingly desirous to know by whose means this promise was to be fulfilled. In his circumstances such curiosity was not only innocent, but laudable; and God, to instruct him in the infinite extent of Divine goodness towards mankind, chose a method of gratifying that curiosity, which, whilst it should put the patriarch's faith to a severer trial than it had yet undergone, might at the same time cause him to *see* and *feel* what it was to lose an only and a beloved son. Without any previous explanation of his object, God therefore said to Abraham, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." So far Bishop Warburton's reasonings appear to us irresistible; but when the learned prelate goes on to assert that, throughout the three days journey that followed, Abraham underwent no care or anxiety, because he knew from the beginning how the matter was to end, and that the transaction was commanded for the mere purpose of showing, by action, how the nations were to be blessed, we are forced to dissent totally from his conclusion. On the contrary, though Abraham's faith was too strong to permit a murmur or remonstrance to escape him, the trial must have been absolutely illusory, if he were aware from the beginning that Isaac's life would not be exacted; whilst one of the Divine objects, if we may so speak, that of making him *feel* how bitter is the pang attending the slaughter of an only son, would have been defeated. We are, therefore, disposed to conclude, that though God had assured Abraham of his intention to gratify the laudable curiosity which he expressed, he by no means carried his design into

execution previous to the commencement of the patriarch's journey, which was conducted under the distressing and heartrending conviction, that it would end in the death of his son Isaac.

In this state of mind Abraham reached the place appointed; built an altar, laid the wood in order, bound his son, laid him upon the wood, and stretched forth his hand, armed with a knife, to complete the sacrifice, when his purpose was suddenly overruled by a voice from heaven. Lifting up his eyes, and looking behind him, he saw a ram caught in a thicket by his horns; and he went, "and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt-offering, in the stead of his son." Throughout the whole of this transaction the most striking resemblance to the sacrifice of the Son of God for the sins of the world may be traced. "Isaac," to use the words of Warburton, "was a son miraculously born, long after his mother was naturally past child-bearing; as Jesus was a son miraculously born of a pure virgin. The duration of the action while Isaac was under sentence of death, was exactly of the same length with that between Christ's death and resurrection; which were both designed to be exhibited to Abraham. The altar on which Isaac was laid was certainly built on the same mountain, and probably on the very spot, on which afterwards Christ actually suffered. And still further, not only the final archetypal sacrifice of the Son of God was figured in the command to offer up Isaac; but the intermediate typical sacrifice in the Mosaic economy was represented by the permitted sacrifice of the ram, offered up instead of Isaac."

It is not necessary to follow the learned prelate through the luminous course of reasoning by which he proves that the mode of communicating information by actions instead of language was universally prevalent in ancient times. The conduct of the Jewish prophets alone distinctly establishes this; and it is by no means

impossible, that Abraham may have perfectly understood the meaning of the scene before him, without direct revelation being granted for that purpose. Still there are reasons which force us to conclude that a positive explanation was granted by God, though Moses, for the most obvious of all reasons, has not recorded it. Had the scene above described passed without a verbal explanation, though Abraham might have gathered from it that mankind were to be redeemed by the death of the only son of some eminent person among his descendants, it seems hardly conceivable that he could have known that the great Redeemer was to be the Son of God, as well as the Son of Man. On the other hand, had Moses left the particulars of that explanation on record, life and immortality would have been brought to light; but that was a revelation for which the Israelites, at the period of their departure out of Egypt, were not prepared; and which it was reserved for a greater than Moses—for the Author as well as Revealer of life, to vouchsafe.

It appears to us, therefore, beyond dispute, that as Abraham clearly “saw Christ’s day and was glad,” at some period of his life, so was that glorious vision granted to him on this occasion; at least, if his view of the great scheme was not obtained during the progress of this transaction, it is vain to look for it elsewhere. Nor is the name given by Abraham to the hill on which the transaction occurred without its weight in assisting us to arrive at this conclusion. It was called by this patriarch Jehovah-jireh, a combination of words signifying Jehovah shall be seen. Had it been the *Lord was seen*, or the *Lord provided*, it might have referred to the Shechinah, when God called to Abraham from the clouds; or to the ram which the Divine voice directed him to provide; but when, after the most interesting part of the transaction was over, Abraham gave to the place a name signifying *Jehovah shall see*, or *shall provide*, or *shall be seen*, even on that very

mount, it seems impossible to refer the name to any thing except that future redemption of which Abraham had now obtained a distinct vision.

Looking at the matter in this light, every difficulty which has been raised against it falls to pieces. Not only is the wisdom and consistency of God's conduct vindicated, but the assertion that the commencement of human sacrifices is to be dated from this source, appears gratuitous. Whether such sacrifices were common or not in Canaan at a period so early as that of Abraham, may be doubted; but they could at least receive no countenance from this transaction. It is in the highest degree improbable, that he would mention it to the heathens at all;—it is not very likely that his own servants were made aware of it; though to Isaac, and perhaps to Sarah, its import would doubtless be made known; but to mankind at large we have no reason to suppose that it was known till Moses declared it. When reported in the writings of that historian, however, it could not possibly be productive of harm, since these explicitly and frequently pronounce, that human sacrifices are an abomination to the God of Israel.

We pass over, as wholly unworthy of notice, certain objections which have been taken to the conduct of Sarah towards Hagar, and to the dismissal of the latter, with her son, by Abraham. In the first case, no more is related than we might naturally expect to learn; whilst in the last, there is nothing at variance with the customs of the times, nor indeed, to a certain degree, with the habits of eastern nations at this moment. When Abraham sent Ishmael and his mother into the world, he made the very same provision for them which Isaac made for his son Jacob; and which seems then to have been universally made for such members of a family as it was deemed prudent to separate from the original stock. He supplied them with provisions for their journey, and left it to themselves to procure the

means of subsistence, when these should be expended. Nor was there the slightest cruelty here. Ishmael must have been, at the time of his migration, at least sixteen or seventeen years old ; he went forth into a district thinly peopled, and abounding with animals of the chase ; and he could not be at a loss, any more than other persons similarly circumstanced, in providing subsistence for himself and his mother. In like manner the behaviour of Lot, both in Sodom and after his escape from that city, though often objected to, as incestuous and immoral, seems susceptible of a very ready explanation. As we have already stated, his strange offer with respect to his daughters is at once accounted for, if we believe it to have sprung not from premeditation, but from the impulse of the moment—as indicating the excess of agitation under which he laboured, rather than any disregard to the honour of his children ; and with respect to the transaction in the cave, there the patriarch at least may be exculpated from all blame. Nor are his daughters to be reprobated, as they would deserve to be, had they acted from the dictation of sinful passion, or vitiated minds. They seem to have regarded themselves and their father as placed in a predicament similar to that which Noah and his family filled after the flood ; and thus thinking, they were unquestionably bound, if they really trusted in God that the promised Deliverer should come, not to permit the human species to perish. From this motive, and from this alone, the sacred historian represents them as acting ; and though they certainly erred, the error is to be attributed not to a corruption of the heart, but to aberration of the judgment.

Besides these facts, we are not ignorant that the account of the rite of circumcision given by Moses has been adduced, as telling strongly against the veracity of the sacred historian. Circumcision, as is well known, was very early practised, both among the

Egyptians and other oriental nations; and profane writers, such as Herodotus, consider the former people to be the inventors of the practice. It has accordingly been argued, by modern infidels, that Moses asserts what is false, when he attributes that ceremony to a solemn covenant entered into between God and the head of the Jewish nation, for that the ceremony existed long prior to the age of Abraham, who merely borrowed it from the Egyptians. Now we know not how this argument can be better met, than in the words of Mr. Bruce, the celebrated traveller in Abyssinia; who, after mentioning a number of tribes among whom circumcision is practised, and stating the different reasons which they assign for it, goes on to say, "But none of them pretend that circumcision arises from necessity of any kind—from any obstruction or impediment to procreation, or that it becomes necessary for cleanliness, or from the heat of the climate. None of these reasons, constantly given in Europe, are ever to be heard of here; nor do I believe they have the smallest foundation any where; and this, I think, should weigh strongly in favour of the account Scripture gives of it. In discussing the question of the origin of the rite, I will suppose Moses a profane author; but till those that argue against his account and maintain that circumcision was earlier than Abraham, shall show me another profane author as old as Moses, and as near to the time they say it began as Moses was to the time of Abraham, I will not argue with them in support of Moses against Herodotus, nor discuss who Herodotus's Phœnicians, and who his Egyptians were that circumcised. Herodotus knew not Abraham nor Moses, and, compared to their days, he is but as yesterday. Those Phœnicians and Egyptians might, for any thing he knew at his time, have received circumcision from Abraham or Ishmael, or some of their posterity, as the Abyssinians or Ethiopians,

whom he refers to, actually say they did; which Herodotus did not know, it is plain, though he mentions they were circumcised."

This appears to us perfectly conclusive on the question, and it may be worth while to remind the reader, that it is quite impossible to suppose the rite to have existed in Egypt prior to its introduction into the family of Abraham, and, at the same time, give any credit to the Mosaic account of the mode of that introduction. Abraham had visited Egypt long before he entered into the COVENANT with God, from whence, among other presents, he brought "men-servants" in abundance. Now had any of these undergone the ceremony prior to the epoch when Abraham was himself circumcised, he would not surely have circumcised them again, at the same time that he circumcised Ishmael. Besides, it is worthy of remark, that all those tribes which trace their descent from Ishmael, circumcise their youth when they attain to their thirteenth year, in memory of their great ancestor, who had attained to that age when he received the seal of adoption.

Much has been said of the improbability of the miraculous destruction by fire of Sodom and Gomorrah. On this head we have only to remark, that the tale is told in a book professing to be written by Divine inspiration; and that there is nothing more improbable in the history itself, considered as an especial interference of God in the ways of men, than in any other judgment recorded in the Bible. If God desired to destroy the cities of the Jordan, there is no reason why he should not have employed fire as the instrument of his vengeance; indeed, the aspect of the country in question, more especially of the lake Asphaltites, or Dead Sea, clearly indicates that at some period or other, a dreadful convulsion of nature took place there. We abstain from quoting any of the marvellous descriptions given of it by ancient writers; but the following extract from Dr. Clark's valuable

travels will suffice to prove, that the district is an exceedingly remarkable one, and that the lake possesses some qualities different from those possessed by other waters :

“ From the town of Bethlehem,” says he, “ the Dead Sea below appeared so near us, that we thought we could have rode thither in a very short space of time. Still nearer stood a mountain, on its western shore, resembling, in its form, the cone of Vesuvius, and having also a crater upon its top, which was plainly discernible. The distance, however, is much greater than it appears to be ; the magnitude of the objects in this fine prospect, causing them to appear less remote than they really are. The atmosphere was remarkably clear and serene ; but we saw none of those clouds of smoke which, by some writers, are said to exhale from the surface of the lake Asphaltites, nor from any neighbouring mountain. Every thing about it was, in the highest degree, grand and awful. Its desolate and majestic features are well suited to the tales related concerning it by the inhabitants of the country, who all speak of it with terror, seeming to shrink from the narrative of its deceitful allurence and deadly influence. ‘ Beautiful fruit,’ say they, ‘ grows upon its shores, which is no sooner touched than it becomes dust and bitter ashes.’ In addition to its physical horrors, the region round is said to be more perilous, owing to the ferocious tribes wandering about the shores of the lake, than any part of the Holy Land. A passion for the marvellous has thus affixed, perhaps, false characteristics to the sublimest associations of natural scenery in the whole world : for though it be now known, that the waters of this lake, instead of proving destructive to animal life, swarm with myriads of fishes ; that instead of falling victims to its exhalations, certain birds make it their peculiar resort ; that shells abound upon its shores ; that the pretended

fruit containing ashes,* is as natural and as admirable a production of nature, as the rest of the vegetable kingdom; that bodies sink or float in it, according to the proportion of their gravity and the gravity of the water;† that its vapours are not more insalubrious than those of any other lake which emits a strong smell of sea-water; that innumerable Arabs people the neighbouring district: notwithstanding all these facts are now well established, even late authors, by whom it is mentioned, continue to fill their descriptions with imaginary horrors and ideal phantoms, which, though less substantial than the black perpendicular rocks around it, ‘cast their lengthened shadows on the waters of the Dead Sea.’ ”

Reland, in his account of lake Asphaltites, after inserting copious extracts from Galen, concerning the properties and quality of the water and its natural history, proceeds to account for the strange fables that have prevailed with respect to its deadly influence, by showing, that certain of the ancients confounded this lake with another bearing the same appellation of Asphaltites (which signifies nothing more than *bituminous*), near Babylon; and that they attributed to it properties which properly belonged to the Babylonian waters. Among the numerous assertors of the remarkable specific gravity of the water, almost every ancient author may be included, by whom the lake has

* Dr. Clarke has gone somewhat too far here. The fruit in question is the *solanum melongena*, or egg plant, which, when attacked by an insect (*Tenthredo*), is literally converted into a heap of dust, the skin only remaining entire, and of a beautiful colour.

† Its specific gravity is 1·211, or nearly one-fifth part more than that of sea-water, and 100 parts of it contain

Muriate of lime	3·920
Magnesia	10·246
Soda	10·360
Sulphate of lime	·054

24·580

been mentioned: this is noticed by Aristotle; and it can hardly be doubted, but that their testimonies have some foundation in reality. Maundrel (*Autoptes*), as he is emphatically styled by Reland, is entitled to implicit confidence in this, as in all other matters where he speaks from his own practical observation. "Being willing," says he, "to make an experiment of its strength, I went into it, and found that it bore up my body with an uncommon force. But as for the relation of some authors, that men wading into it were buoyed up to the top as soon as they got as deep as the navel, I found it, upon experiment, not true. Its water, although limpid like that of the sea of Galilee, and resulting from the same river Jordan, instead of being as that is, sweet and salutary, is, in the highest degree, salt, bitter, and nauseous."

Such is the lake that covers the spot of ground upon which the devoted cities are supposed to have stood, extending in length about twenty-four leagues, and in breadth about six or seven. That there is nothing impossible in the supposition, which has universal tradition at least to support it, the following considerations may show:—In the first place it is to be observed, that the vale of Sodom abounds in veins of bitumen, which are to be found, not only on the surface, but to a great depth in the soil. In the next place it is worthy of notice, that bitumen, whether in a liquid or solid state, is exceedingly combustible; and that a thunderbolt falling upon it would no more fail of setting it on fire, than the flash from the steel and flint fails to ignite gunpowder. Now the account given by Moses is, that "the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven;" by which, according to the Hebrew idiom, is to be understood flaming brimstone, in other words, lightning. It is true that Moses, though he adds, "that God overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities,

and that which grew upon the ground," does not explain how this overthrow took place; but a knowledge of the above facts at once leads to the following as at least a probable conclusion. The lightning falling upon the bitumen would instantly set it on fire, and the fire would not only skim the surface but penetrate deep into the soil, sweeping along, as it does in a coal-pit, with the vein of combustible matter. The consequence would be that a terrible earthquake would take place, followed, as such a convulsion always is, by a subsiding of the ground; and the waters rushing into the hollow thus created, would, by mixing with the bitumen, form a small lake, where, previous to the awful visitation, a fruitful valley lay. Thus would perish the cities and their polluted inhabitants; whilst the lake would remain as a lasting memorial of God's power to punish as well by fire as by a deluge of water.

Of the transformation of Lot's wife during the escape of the patriarch to Zoar, we have already said as much as appears necessary in a work like this. If she lagged behind till the shower of brimstone overtook her, there can be little doubt of the fate which she underwent. Being incrustated in a coat of burning bitumen, she would not only perish, but a heap of saline matter would remain standing where she did; and this seems to be all that is implied in the original Hebrew, by her being changed into a pillar of salt. Nor is there any necessity why we should delay in order to give a detailed account of Melchizedek, over whose condition the language of St. Paul alone has thrown any degree of mystery. Melchizedek seems to have been a pious and upright man, who, as was then universally done, discharged the double office of king and priest to a petty tribe in Palestine, and Abraham seems to have presented him with a tenth part of his plunder, as an acknowledgment of respect and deference. As to St. Paul's

expressions, they refer simply to the distinction which existed between the Patriarchal and Levitical priesthood ; the one being universal, and of universal continuance ; the other exclusive, and of temporary duration ; whilst our Saviour is said to be “ a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek,” in reference to the abolition of that exclusive priesthood which existed under the Mosaic dispensation. But it is high time to return to the order of our narrative.

CHAPTER VIII.

Isaac's marriage.—Births of Esau and Jacob.—Their History.—Objections stated and answered.

A. M. 3398 to 3526.—B. C. 2013 to 1885.

AT the death of Abraham, Isaac, as a matter of course, succeeded to the wealth which the great patriarch left behind him, as well as to the far more valuable possession of God's special favour and protection. Of a gentle and peaceable, if not an indolent disposition, he appears to have passed through life, subject to fewer trials than befell almost any other of these ancient worthies. Yet even Isaac's career was not absolutely free from annoyances, of the nature and causes of which, a few words will suffice to give a description.

Isaac was forty years old when he took to wife Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel, the Syrian of Padan-aram. According to the Jewish tradition she was then a mere girl, not more than fourteen years of age; and though we can hardly believe her to have been so youthful as this, it is evident from a consideration of certain occurrences in their after history, that she must have been a great deal younger than her husband. Be this as it may, we learn that during the first twenty years after their marriage, she was barren, and we know that of all calamities this was accounted, in patriarchal times, the most dis-

travelling. But though God thus tried the faith of his servant, his own designs remained unaltered, and at last he listened to the prayer of Rebekah, and granted her request. She proved with child, and as she suffered severely during pregnancy, it was Divinely communicated to her, that the burden which she bore was of no common kind. "Two nations," said the Lord, "are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger." This was an announcement clearly implying that the children which she should bring into the world were destined for some remarkable ends; and the very aspect of the infants themselves, as well as the peculiar manner of their birth, could hardly fail of throwing some light upon the purport of the prophecy.

When her days were accomplished that she should be delivered, Rebekah gave birth to twins, the first of whom was covered with a sort of red hair, whilst the second, as if jealous of his brother's pre-eminence, came into the world grasping the heel of his relative. To the elder was given the name of Esau, a word signifying red; to the younger that of Jacob, implying one who supplants; and as the children differed in their personal appearance from the womb, so in all their future career they bore no similarity the one to the other. As they grew up, Esau "was" to use the language of Scripture, "a cunning man, and a man of the field," whereas Jacob "was a plain man, and dwelt in tents."

The first occasion on which we find Jacob acting up to the character implied in his name, was as follows: It happened that Esau, having been long abroad in the exercise of his favourite occupation, hunting, returned home one day spent with fatigue and hunger; and seeing his brother feasting upon a mess of lentile pottage, he eagerly requested a por-

tion. It were vain to offer any palliation for the conduct of Jacob under such circumstances. Aware of his brother's natural impatience, and covetous of his birthright, he stipulated with him, before he granted his request, that he would resign that great privilege in his favour; and Esau, careless of future good when brought into comparison with an immediate gratification, readily closed with the terms.

Soon after this there arose a famine in the land, upon which Isaac prepared to do, as his father had done before him, by retiring into Egypt; but he had proceeded no further than Gerar, when a divine vision met him, and directed him to remain where he was, because God was with him. At the same time the promises so repeatedly made to Abraham, were graciously renewed to him. He was informed that his seed should be numerous as the stars of heaven; that the whole of the surrounding country should become their inheritance, and finally that "in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed." That Isaac, himself an antetype of the great Deliverer, perfectly understood the import of this promise, there is no room to doubt, and he was too pious to refuse obedience to the command which preceded it.

It is somewhat remarkable, that Isaac should have fallen into the very same error here, which was formerly committed by his father Abraham. Unaccountably distrustful of the power or will of God to defend him from every species of danger, he caused Rebekah to represent herself as his sister; and when the fraud was detected by Abimelech, the King of Gerar, he frankly owned that it had been practised through fear. But Abimelech was by no means disposed to treat him as he had apprehended. On the contrary, he issued a proclamation prohibiting any of his subjects from molesting the man or his wife; and for some little time Isaac and the people of the district dwelt amicably together.

This state of things, however, was not of long continuance. The favour of God so manifestly followed Isaac, and all his affairs flourished so abundantly, that the Philistines became envious of his growing prosperity; and insults and wrongs were put upon his followers such as they deemed it impossible to endure. Wells which they had dug for their own use, were seized and filled up; aggressions were daily made upon their settlement, and at last Isaac was arbitrarily directed by Abimelech to quit the country. He did so, and removed first to a place which, because he was no longer straitened, he named Rehoboth; and next to a more permanent abode, Beer-sheba, where Abraham had dwelt before him. Here he built an altar to Jehovah, and caused the ancient wells to be cleared out; and here the gracious promise was again renewed to him, by the God whom he ceased not to worship. Nor were these the only benefits which attended him here. Abimelech, either ashamed of his past misconduct, or made aware that Isaac was under the especial care of heaven, followed him with a large company to Beer-sheba, and, apologizing for what had happened, entered with him into the same league which had originally subsisted between himself and Abraham.

The sons of Isaac being now grown up to manhood, the elder took to himself wives from among the Hittites; Judith, the daughter of Beeri, and Bashemath, the daughter of Elon. This was a source of extreme regret to the patriarch and his wife; more especially to the latter, whose affections appear to have been entirely alienated by it from her firstborn; and no great while elapsed, ere an opportunity offered of indulging that excessive partiality for Jacob, which she had all along nourished. It happened on a certain occasion, that Isaac, being oppressed with weakness and old age, felt a violent desire to bestow upon his son the solemn blessing which should constitute him the head of the

family. He accordingly summoned Esau into his presence, towards whom he had ever been partial, and directed him to go forth into the field, to kill for him some venison, and to dress it according to his taste. Esau lost no time in obeying the wishes of his father, for whom he appears to have entertained the most profound respect, but hurried abroad in the confident expectation of receiving a solemn benediction on his return.

He had not long quitted Isaac's presence, when Rebekah, anxious that her favourite should obtain that enviable distinction, fell upon a scheme for deceiving her aged husband. She caused Jacob to fetch two kids from the flock; killed and dressed them, so as to imitate venison, and disguising her son's wrists, and the smooth of his neck, by covering them with the skins of the slaughtered animals, sent him in to personate his brother. Though suspicious at first that all was not as he intended it, Isaac came gradually to believe the falsehoods which Jacob uttered. His eyes being dim he could not detect the fraud; and as Jacob was arrayed in one of Esau's garments, the senses both of smell and touch were in opposition to that of hearing. He accordingly poured out upon the head of the supplanter, that solemn and irrevocable benediction which constituted him the heir of the promises made to Abraham and to his seed.

This scene had scarcely passed when Esau arrived, and carrying in his venison, piously requested the blessing which his father had promised. There are few details, even in Holy Writ, more affecting than those which follow. Isaac felt that he had been imposed upon, and lamented it sorely, though he felt also that that which was done could not be undone; whilst Esau deplored his misfortune in terms of no ordinary bitterness, and besought his father "to bless him also." Finally, Isaac did bless Esau, but not as he had blessed

Jacob. He gave him "the fatness of the earth, and the dew of heaven," valour and high courage, though in subserviency to his brother; but that which was more valuable than all the rest, had already been awarded, and was no longer his to bestow. The consequences were exactly such as might be expected. Esau hated his brother, resolved upon destroying him, and only waited till his father should return unto dust, in order to carry that resolution into force.

But Jacob was no longer an ordinary man, to be measured by the scale of individual moral excellence. He was an instrument in the hands of that Providence which never forsook him, and which thus early began to screen him from injury. Rebekah overhearing the murmured threats of her elder son, and fearful lest they should be accomplished, again deceived her husband, for the sake of conveying her favourite to a place of safety; and Jacob was dismissed to find a temporary home in the bosom of his mother's family.

Of the fortunes which attended Jacob, the inspired historian has given a very minute account, saying little more either of Isaac or Esau, till they came again in contact with the wanderer. All that we are told concerning them is, that Isaac dismissed his youngest son with a solemn injunction, not to take a wife from among the daughters of Canaan; and that Esau, perceiving that he had done wrong in marrying as he originally did, chose as a third wife his own cousin Mahalath, the daughter of Ishmael. We are therefore led to conclude that Isaac lived a quiet and indolent life, part of which was spent at Beer-sheba, part at Hebron, in Mamre; while Esau, sitting down at Mount Seir, kept up little intercourse with any member of his own family, during the period of his brother's absence. But the case was widely different with respect to Jacob: his was a career of bustle, intrigue, activity, and labour; throughout which he appears to have been preserved, supported, and rendered prosperous, if not happy, solely

on account of the great object, for the accomplishment of which he was chosen.

The first remarkable adventure which befell him after quitting the settlement of his father, was this : fatigued with long travel, and overtaken in the open country by night, he lay down to sleep in the fields ; and had scarcely closed his eyes, his head resting on a pillow of stones, ere a very striking vision passed before him. He saw, as it were, a great ladder that reached from earth to heaven, upon which troops of angels appeared to ascend and descend, whilst from the top there came a solemn voice, which assured him that every thing which had been promised to Abraham should be fulfilled in him. “ I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father,” said the voice, “ and the God of Isaac : the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed. And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth ; and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south : and in thee, and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” It was moreover declared, that God would be his protector and guide, and would never leave him till he had done that of which he had spoken. This, in all probability, was the first communication with which Jacob had been favoured by the Most High ; for he awoke in terrible dismay ; and in commemoration of so strange an event, changed the name of the place from Luz to Beth-el. But the impression made upon him seems to have been many degrees removed from that which similar visitations produced upon his righteous grandfather. Instead of thankfully acknowledging God’s goodness, and his own unworthiness to receive it, Jacob presumed to enter into bargain with the great Being who addressed him, pledging himself that in the event of being carried safely to his journey’s end, and brought back prosperously to his father’s house, Jehovah should be his God.

Recovered from the awe which the nocturnal vision

had excited, Jacob continued his progress, and arrived, in due time, at a spot near the town of Haran, where Laban's shepherds kept their sheep. Here he first saw his cousin Rachel, for whom he conceived an immediate attachment, and to whom, after assisting her to water her flocks, he made himself known; and being conducted home, he immediately took upon himself the office of servant or shepherd to his relative. We need scarcely observe, that in a pastoral age, like that of the patriarch's, such service was no indication of natural, or rather of artificial inferiority. On the contrary, it was a state into which all adventurers entered, who chose to seek a maintenance apart from their own families; and so little was Jacob despised by Laban because he happened to be his servant, that the master scrupled not to promise him the hand of one of his daughters. Jacob, it appears, declined to accept hire or wages, in the common acceptation of the term, but covenanted to serve his uncle seven years, provided he would give him Rachel in marriage; and Laban readily acceding to his terms, Jacob became at once the affianced husband of his cousin.

When the period arrived at which he was to receive his bride, Laban, either valuing his services highly, and so being anxious to retain him, or instigated, as he himself asserted, by the customs of the place, put a cheat upon Jacob, hardly less galling than that which Jacob imposed upon his brother Esau. Having another daughter besides Rachel, by name Leah, the elder and far less beautiful of the two, he resolved to introduce her into Jacob's bed; not doubting but that his relative would easily be persuaded to serve other seven years for the object of his choice. Laban was not deceived in his expectations. The peculiar ceremonies which attended those early marriages, affording him ample opportunity of executing his scheme, he found, in the morning, that he had not miscalculated the strength of Jacob's attachment, who at once agreed to

protract his period of servitude to fourteen years, rather than lose his beloved Rachel.*

In this manner Jacob became possessed of two wives, the elder of whom bore him four sons in succession, whilst the younger was barren. The names of the children were Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, all of these words having reference to the condition of their mother, and the hopes which she from time to time encouraged. In the mean while, Rachel sorely disappointed at her own sterility, adopted an expedient similar to that which Sarah had adopted with Abraham; she gave to Jacob as a secondary wife or concubine, her handmaid Bilhah. The latter bore two sons, who, by direction of Rachel were named Dan and Naphtali, the first being a term expressive of judgment, the last of consolation. But Leah was not contented to sit down under a sense of imaginary inferiority, so she also presented Jacob with her maid Zilpah, by whom he had Gad and Asher.

Things were in this state, when Reuben, Jacob's eldest son, happening to go into the fields about the time of wheat-harvest, gathered some *mandrakes*, which he carried to his mother. Rachel saw and coveted them, but being sullenly answered by Leah, that she had already done her sufficient injury by stealing away her husband, she endeavoured to compromise the quarrel by resigning to her a privilege, which belonged by right to herself.†

The consequence was that Leah brought forth a fifth, and in due time, a sixth son, the former of whom she

* "The modesty of those times," says Bishop Patrick, "made them bring the bride to her husband's bed, veiled, and without lights; so that it was the easier for Laban to deceive Jacob by bringing Leah to him; whom he could not hope to dispose of so easily in marriage as Rachel, because she was homely."

† The custom of those countries where polygamy was allowed, was for the husband to take his wives by turns. The kings of Persia (if we may believe Herodotus) were not exempt from

called Issachar, and the latter Zebulon; and last of all a daughter, named Dinah, the feminine of Dan.

It was now that God, willing to take away the reproach from Rachel, caused her also to bear a son, whom in the triumph of her heart, she called Joseph, a word signifying increasing. She was scarcely recovered, when Jacob, having completed his period of servitude, came to Laban, and demanded his dismissal; but Laban, conscious that God had blessed him for Jacob's sake, urgently entreated him to remain. He yielded at length to the solicitations of his father-in-law; not, however, till he had stipulated for a hire which he well knew how to render valuable; and he abode a few years longer with Laban, as his shepherd.

Time passed, and Jacob by means not always the most honourable, or most upright, became possessed of great wealth, and large possessions. This very naturally excited the indignation of Laban and his sons, who, not without a show of reason, looked upon themselves as plundered by their relative; and Jacob was in consequence fain to devise means for secretly escaping from the evil passions which he had excited. With this view he precipitately fled from Haran, at a moment when Laban was engaged in a distant part of the country; and, passing the Euphrates, proceeded as far as Gilead, where he pitched his tent in the mountain; but in his flight he had not been over careful in hindering his family from wronging those from whom they separated. His favourite wife, Rachel, probably infected with that strange mixture of idolatry and true religion which seems at this time to have prevailed every where beyond the limits of Isaac's establishment, had stolen the teraphim, or idols, to which her father was in the habit of addressing his prayers, and thus

this rule; which makes it more probable that Rachel sold her turn to her sister for that night, than that she directed her husband which of the four he should lie with.—*Universal History*, b. i. c. 7.

furnished him with a legitimate excuse for following in anger, a fugitive, over whom he undoubtedly possessed no right of sovereignty or rule.

Laban was no sooner made aware of Jacob's flight, than he armed his followers and retainers, and marched after him. The consequences to the latter might have been very serious, had not God warned Laban, in a dream, not to molest him; but the issue was, that after a good deal of mutual recrimination, and a fruitless search for the teraphim, a reconciliation took place, and Jacob was permitted to continue his journey in peace. But though miraculously delivered from one danger, his way was by no means secure. Having despatched messengers to Seir, for the purpose of deprecating his brother's anger, and assuring him that by returning into Canaan he meant in no respect to interfere with his possessions, he was alarmed at their return, by the intelligence that Esau was advancing to meet him; and that he came at the head of a considerable military force, like one whose designs were the reverse of friendly. Jacob's courage would have probably failed him altogether, had not God opened his eyes, so that he beheld a host of angels encamped, as it were, near him; which so far restored his self-possession as that he was able to devise a plan for the preservation of some portion, at least, of his goods and retinue. He divided his company into three bands, causing one to keep at a considerable interval from the other; and having instructed those in the rear to escape as they best could, in case the front should be attacked, he directed the whole to move on.

Having made these arrangements overnight, and sent forward a present to Esau, he himself lagged behind, at the brook Jabbok, to pray. He was thus engaged, when a man suddenly appeared, who desired to wrestle with him; and Jacob complying, they continued the exercise, without success on either side, till day began to appear. It was now that the stranger,

to show how easily he might have prevailed, touched Jacob's thigh, and caused the sinew to shrink; after which he explained to him that he was of no mortal order, but that the whole was symbolical of Jacob's security against danger. Finally, he gave to the patriarch the name of Israel, which signifies, *a man that has prevailed with God*; and solemnly blessing him, departed.

Of the remainder of Jacob's adventures in the course of his journey from this place, which, in commemoration of what had befallen him there, he named Peniel (the face of God), it is not necessary to give a very lengthened account. Let it suffice to state, that his brother Esau, so far from meeting him in anger, freely forgave him all the injuries he had received, and could with difficulty be prevailed upon to accept even a present at his hands. He embraced him affectionately, urged him to come and visit him at Seir, and offered to leave a guard for his protection; and when Jacob declined the favour, he departed in peace to his own settlement.

Jacob's next halting-place was at Shechem, where he purchased a piece of ground from Hamor, the king, having merely rested by the way at Succoth, for the purpose of avoiding further intercourse with Esau. The probability is, that he would have sojourned in the country of Shechem some time, had not the king's son, by name Shechem, violated his daughter Dinah; whom, nevertheless, the young man so ardently loved, that he would have gladly married her. But Jacob's sons, indignant at the insult put upon the family, first of all persuaded the men of Shechem to submit to the rite of circumcision, and then attacking the city when its male inhabitants were defenceless from fever, utterly destroyed it. Every man was slain; and the women and children, as well as the cattle and flocks, were seized by the conquerors. Jacob was seriously alarmed, and not without reason, at the consequences which might ensue. He apprehended that the whole of the

surrounding country would become hostile to him; either through fear of suffering themselves similar outrages, or because of their alliances with Shechem; and he was glad when God gave him particular directions to retire to Beth-el. As he intended, however, with more than ordinary solemnity, to worship God in that place, he directed his household to put away their strange gods—in other words, to rid themselves of the idols which they had taken at Shechem; and to abolish every thing like idolatrous practices from the very Shechemite captives themselves. This done, he struck his tents, and arrived without molestation at the place appointed; where he erected an altar to Jehovah, and once more received a renewal of the great promise.

Jacob's sojourn at Beth-el was not very protracted, for his father was now well stricken in years, and he experienced a strong and laudable desire to see him once before he died. With this design he resumed his journey, hoping to reach Ephrath by nightfall; but the first of a series of heavy misfortunes befell him here, in the death of his beloved wife Rachel. She expired soon after she had brought into the world a son, whom she named Ben-oni, or the son of my sorrow; but whom his father, considering the appellation too melancholy, afterwards called Benjamin, the child of strength. Having paid the last tribute to her remains, and erected a stone to her memory, the patriarch travelled on, halting for a brief season at Edar, where another and no less heavy blow fell upon him. His eldest son, Reuben, committed incest with his father's concubine, Bilhah; which so distressed Jacob, that though he refrained from noticing it at the moment, he marked his abhorrence of it in a striking manner at his last hour. Finally he arrived at Hebron, in the country of Mamre, just in time to close Isaac's eyes, who expired in his 180th year, and was piously buried by his sons Esau and Jacob.

The same remark which we hazarded at the close of

a previous chapter, seems perfectly applicable at the close of this. There are but few events in the preceding details which, if due regard be made to the habits of the age, and the purpose of God in electing the family of Abraham, can affect the reflecting mind with doubt, or even with uneasiness. The preference of Jacob to Esau has indeed been repeatedly quoted, as well by those who would hold up revelation, in general, to contempt, as by the disciples of Calvin in support of their own tenets; but a little dispassionate consideration will, we trust, suffice to satisfy the reader, that there is nothing in the transaction either derogatory to the Divine nature, or inculcative of the horrible doctrine of particular election.

No truth can be better attested than this, that Almighty God, in selecting instruments for the furtherance of great and useful ends, has not always been guided in his choice by the consideration of the moral worth of individuals. But if such has been the case in matters of, comparatively speaking, little moment, much more has it been the case in the steps which he has seen good to take for ushering his Son, our Redeemer, into the world. Their own lawgiver, Moses, justly characterized the Jewish people, when he pronounced them to be a stiffnecked and perverse generation—qualities which undoubtedly adhered to them throughout the whole of their history; yet this very people was made the channel, so to speak, through which the greatest blessing that ever came upon the world was made to flow. Almost the same thing may be said of Jacob, the founder of the Jewish nation. As we have taken particular care, in the preceding pages, neither to disguise nor palliate his offences, it will be seen, that in very many of the virtues most essential to the welfare of society, he was deficient; yet God chose, nevertheless, to confer upon him the high and unspeakable honour of being the forefather, according to the flesh, of the promised Redeemer. Now we

really see nothing in this, either prejudicial to the character of the Deity (if we may so venture to express ourselves), or confirmative of the unaccountable doctrine of arbitrary decrees; on the contrary, we perceive proofs of God's infinite goodness and wisdom, and of the absolute impartiality by which all his dealings with mankind are regulated.

Let it be borne in mind, that the point to be determined between Esau and Jacob, was not one which in any degree affected the two men, as individuals; either in this life, or the life which is to come. In this life, on the contrary, Jacob clearly underwent many more hardships than attended upon his brother Esau; as witness his miserable exit from his father's house; his terrors both from Laban and Esau; his family misfortunes, beginning with the death of Rachel, and ending only in his extreme old age; whilst of his destiny in a future state, as compared with that of Esau, we neither know, nor shall know, any thing till after our own has been determined. On the contrary, the question to be decided by Divine wisdom was this; which of these two men should be the human forefather of Christ; and that question, as if it had been his object to prove, that the moral excellence of the individuals themselves was in no respect concerned in it, God decided ere the children were born; for it was whilst they were yet in her womb that God told Rebekah that the elder should serve the younger; a declaration which distinctly implied, that he had elected the younger, in preference to the elder, as his instrument for the general benefit of mankind.

If it be objected, that the moral improbity of Jacob ought to have induced God, even after his election was made, to change it, we answer, that had such an occurrence happened, it must have inevitably placed the great work of the Creator in a point of view absolutely unworthy and mischievous. It is quite clear that the Messiah could come only of one of the two

brothers. Now, had God chosen the elder and more virtuous of the two (and with all his faults we are inclined to regard Esau as more virtuous than Jacob) men might, and probably would have said, that the consequences were the mere natural right of Esau's primogeniture, and superior moral excellence; whereas God by passing him by, and electing his younger and less worthy brother, has shown that his designs were not partial but general, and that, in the widest sense of the term, he is no respecter of persons.

Such being the case, we will not waste our own or our reader's time by endeavouring to devise excuses for the crimes of Jacob and Rebekah. They both sinned grievously; Jacob not only in his dealings with his brother, but in his transactions with Laban; and Rebekah as well in the matter of the blessing as afterwards: but God in this, as in many other instances, caused the sins of particular persons to advance the general good, exactly as he makes storms and earthquakes, though in themselves evils, operate to the benefit of men and beasts in the natural world.

Having thus abstained from all attempts at vindicating the moral conduct of Jacob, it will scarcely be expected that we should enter into any defence of the errors and crimes of his children and contemporaries. So far from this, we regard the Mosaic history as advancing its highest claim to our belief, in consequence of the undisguisedness with which it records not only the acts of piety, but the transgressions of the founders of the Jewish nation. What impostor, for example, would have described the incest of Reuben? A matter which but for Moses's account of it, never would have been heard of; or what inventor of a fable, the design of which is to hold up a hero to general admiration, would have stated, as Moses has done, the paltry and dishonest shifts by which Jacob increased his flocks and herds. In like manner Jacob's covenant with Jehovah, "that if he would do so and so,

then he (Jacob) would acknowledge him as God." This, as it implies that the patriarch's faith was as yet very insecurely grounded, never would have been related by one whose design was other than to speak the truth; whilst his honest confession of Rachel's leaning to idolatry and image-worship, not only adds to his own credibility, but gives us a better notion of the religious state of the world, than we could have otherwise obtained. But it may be said, how became Jacob so ignorant of the Divine nature as his recorded vow shows him to have been? We do not think there is any difficulty in accounting for that fact, which clearly arose out of contingencies, not more natural than common.

From all that we read of the history of Isaac and his family, it is evident that the patriarch, though an exceedingly good, was a very indolent and timid person. He appears, moreover, like many other fathers, to have nourished an extreme partiality for one of his sons, to the neglect of the other; while the other, in accordance with common usage, became proportionably a favourite with his mother. By this means Jacob's religious education was, we may well believe; sadly neglected; at all events, the same care which Abraham bestowed upon Isaac, to impress him with correct notions of the Deity, was by no means exercised in favour of Jacob. The consequence was, that though Jacob had doubtless heard something of Jehovah, and of his predilection for the family of which he was a member, he had not, at the period of his emigration, been accustomed to think of him as the supreme Governor of heaven and earth; but probably regarded him as a God, equal in power, though not superior, to the tutelary deities worshipped by the tribes among whom they dwelt. Hence his stipulation, that if Jehovah desired to be his God, he should guide him in safety; for the vow clearly implies, that in the event of Jacob not being protected, Jehovah should

not be his God. Now we really see nothing in all this at variance with our notions of God's goodness, or his gracious purposes; on the contrary, we perceive distinctly that the coming of the Messiah was deferred, because as yet, and for many ages after, mankind were not in a condition to benefit by the pure and spiritual religion, which it was one object of his coming to inculcate.

Whatever objection might be offered to the wrestling-match between Jacob and the angel, and to the readiness with which Jacob's wives advanced their handmaids to the dignity of his bed, have, we think, been met, in previous discussions. The scene between the angel and Jacob, was a mere repetition of that mode of conveying information, which we have stated to have been in common use in former times; a system in which action supplied the place of words, whilst the reasons which guided Jacob's wives, were very just and simple. Their handmaids being their slaves, and so, in the strictest sense of the term, their property, they naturally concluded, that whatever children they might have, would become their property also; whilst the reluctance which women experience in the western regions, to share the beds of their husbands with others, has not, and never appears to have had, any existence in the east.

We have only to add, that the general truth of the Mosaic history receives ample confirmation from the account of those times, given by all heathen writers who have treated of them. Sanchoniathon, Berosus, Hecatæus, Eupolmus, and others, as they are quoted by Eusebius, in his *Præpositio Evangelica*, all bear us out in our assertion. The same thing may be said of many of the ancient books of the Hindoos, which have been examined by Sir William Jones, and other members of the Asiatic Society. The fable of Jupiter's chain, which, according to Homer, reached from heaven to earth, has clearly been borrowed, as far as it has re-

ference to divine Providence, from Jacob's vision of the ladder. Jacob's residence with his uncle Laban, in the capacity of a servant, is the groundwork of that beautiful tale, which introduces Apollo to our notice as the shepherd of Admetus; whilst the whole of the patriarch's adventures at Shechem, the rape of Dinah, and its consequences, are related by Alexander Polyhistor, almost in the same order which has been preserved by Moses. In a word, there is nothing told in the preceding chapter, which falls not perfectly in with our notions of the state of society in those early days, modified and overruled as that was, from time to time, in a family taken, for particular purposes, under the guidance of an especial Providence.

CHAPTER IX.

History of Jacob continued.—Joseph sold into Egypt.—His fortunes there.—Objections stated and answered.

A. M. 3526 to 3548.—B. C. 1885 to 1863.

FROM this time forward, the sacred historian limits his details to the family of Jacob, the destined heir of the promises. He tells us, indeed, where Esau settled, as well as the fortunes which attended most of his descendants; some of whom, the Idumæans, were in aftertimes called upon strictly to fulfil the letter of Isaac's blessing:—but it is to Jacob, and his proceedings, that our attention is now mainly confined; and these are in themselves abundantly interesting.

It would appear that Esau, either partial to the territory which he had acquired with his own hand, or directed by his father's will so to do, no sooner saw Isaac's body committed to the ground, than he abandoned Canaan, and retired without strife or contention to his home in Mount Seir. By this means Jacob entered at once into possession of his father's settlement, where for some time he spent a quiet and easy life; though his want of judgment exhibited in managing his family affairs, had already sown the seeds of disunion and trouble. Nor did any great while elapse ere these evils showed themselves; of which the following may be accounted at least the proximate cause:

Jacob had all along retained his partiality for Rachel, whom alone, of his four wives, he seems ever truly to have loved. It was not, perhaps, unnatural, that the partiality which he experienced for the mother, should be extended to her offspring; but it was, to say the least of it, exceedingly impolitic to exhibit that partiality so glaringly. Once before, it is to be observed, he evinced his disposition to preserve Rachel and her children, should all the rest perish, by placing them in the rear of his entire band, when he supposed himself to be threatened by Esau; and he now took every opportunity of showing, that the rest of his children were in his eyes as nothing, when compared with those which Rachel had brought him. Joseph, in particular, her firstborn, was his especial favourite; a feeling for which the naturally amiable qualities of the youth, seem sufficiently to account; and he took so little pains to disguise the preference, that the lad became, as in a state of society so rude it might be expected that he would, an object of jealousy and abhorrence to his brothers. Among other marks of favour, Jacob caused a coat of many colours to be made for Joseph; a matter of itself of small moment, but which acquired adventitious importance, on account of the feeling which produced it. This was scarcely done, when the youth, very unintentionally inflamed the anger of his brothers, by repeating two remarkable dreams with which he had been favoured. The substance of these was, first, that he and his brothers were binding sheaves together, in the field, and that his brother's sheaves made obeisance to his; and next, that the sun, the moon, and eleven stars, did him homage. His brothers, ready, as envious men ever are, to catch at straws, considered these words as an intimation that he intended at some time to aim at usurping the mastery over them; and though his father openly discountenanced Joseph in his endeavours to obtain an inter-

pretation of the dreams, they resolved to put it effectually out of his power to bring about their accomplishment.

It happened on a certain occasion, that Jacob sent Joseph to inquire into the welfare of his brothers, who kept their flocks at a considerable distance from home, and in the vicinity of Shechem. As he approached that place, he met a man who informed him that his relatives had removed to a pasturage about twenty miles north, called Dothan; and thither, in obedience to his father's instructions, he followed them. But his brothers no sooner beheld him afar off than they began to lay plans for his murder; one suggesting to the other, that the crime might easily be concealed, and the blame of his death laid upon a wild beast of the forest. In this instance, Reuben, who had previously behaved so ill, acted with great kindness, if not with courage. He dissuaded them from imbruing their hands in innocent blood, advised that they should rather cast him into a pit to perish, and determined, as soon as his brothers should quit the spot, privately to draw him out and restore him to his father. So much of Reuben's plan was acted upon, that they cast the boy into a pit; but before the opportunity for which he waited occurred, certain Ishmaelite merchants happened to pass, to whom Judah suggested that it would be a prudent measure to sell their brother as a slave. The hint was immediately taken; Joseph was drawn up out of the pit, and his coat being stripped off, torn, and smeared with blood, he was disposed of at a price to these travelling Arabs. By them he was forthwith transported into Egypt, for the purpose of being resold, and he was finally purchased by a person of high rank—Potiphar, the captain of the guard to king Pharaoh.

When his son's coat, in its torn and bloody state, was conveyed to Jacob, he mourned over him as

believing that he had fallen a victim to some savage animal, and for a considerable while would receive no comfort from his wives, or the remainder of his children. Nor, to say the truth, was the conduct of his sons such, as to reconcile him to the loss of Joseph. Crimes were committed, in the family of Judah in particular, which could not fail to grieve one, rendered, as Jacob now was, sincerely pious by calamity; whilst the rest daily harassed him, by their petulance towards him, and their disunion among themselves. But the career of Joseph, though not unattended with difficulties, was upon the whole an exceedingly prosperous one, and he who had been sold as a slave by his envious brethren, proved in the end, the preserver and benefactor of all his race.

We have said that immediately on his arrival in Egypt, Joseph was sold by the Ishmaelitish merchants to Potiphar, the captain of the guard of king Pharaoh. In the family of this man he lived for some time, both happily and respectably, gaining, by the probity of his conduct, the entire confidence of his master; who at length advanced him to the honourable and responsible station of steward of his household and regulator of his domestic affairs. He was thus circumstanced when his master's wife conceived for him a violent and sinful passion. She made repeated advances to him, all of which he repelled; and at last on occasion of some solemn festival, when her husband with the rest of the servants had gone abroad, she proceeded so far, that Joseph could escape from her importunities only by flight, and by leaving his upper garment in her hand. It is said that love rejected becomes, especially in women, the bitterest and most rancorous hate, and whatever truth there may be in the observation generally, in this particular instance it was fully verified. The lady, mortified at his behaviour, and fearful of discovery,

determined to prevent him in a disclosure, and accordingly, at her husband's return, told such a tale as excited his utmost indignation against Joseph. The ungrateful slave, as he esteemed him, was not so much as allowed an opportunity of speaking in his own defence; but, being loaded with chains, was conveyed without delay to a dungeon in the common prison. But the same Providence which had guided him into the family of Potiphar, befriended Joseph even in bonds. Whether a suspicion of the truth entered into the governor's mind, or whether he was actuated merely by compassion for the stranger, we are not told, only we learn that Joseph found favour in his eyes, and the upright and intelligent manner in which he discharged the duties that were intrusted to him speedily confirmed the Egyptian in the favourable opinion which he had formed,* "and the keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the Lord was with him, and that which he did the Lord made it to prosper."

Such was Joseph's condition when an event befell, productive in the end of great and important consequences. There were two of Pharaoh's servants confined in this prison, the one his chief baker, the other his chief butler, for what crime, or on what charge arrested, we have no information. Each of these, on a particular occasion, dreamed a very remarkable dream; so remarkable, indeed, as to leave a vivid and painful impression on their minds; and Joseph, at their request, gave to their dreams an interpretation. The butler dreamed that having squeezed the juice from a bunch of exquisite grapes that hung upon a vine with three branches, he gave the king's cup as formerly into his master's hand; the baker, that having on his head three white baskets

* Joseph became a sort of inferior functionary.

full of different kinds of baked meats, the birds of the air came and eat them out of the baskets. Joseph told them, that their dreams were sent by God to prognosticate their fates, for that at the end of three days the chief butler would be restored to his office, whilst the chief baker would be hanged. Both events justified Joseph's predictions; but the chief butler, whom Joseph had besought to remember him when he returned into power, thought no more of the poor Hebrew or of his own assurance of patronage.

Time passed, and a circumstance somewhat similar to that which had befallen to his servants, happened to Pharaoh, King of Egypt, himself. He dreamed a dream so singular in its nature, so marked and distinct in all its progress, as to convince him that it must be of more than common import, and he accordingly called before him all the Magi, or "wise men," as our version terms them, desiring that they would interpret it. Their interpretations, however, were far from satisfying the king, who, on the contrary, became exceedingly uneasy; till his chief butler recollecting how perfectly Joseph's predictions had been fulfilled in his own, and in his comrade's case, recommended that he should be consulted.

The king gladly followed his advice; and Joseph being removed from the prison, the king repeated to him his dream in the following terms: "I was walking on the banks of the Nile," said he, "and, behold, there came up out of the river seven well-favoured kine and fat-fleshed; and they fed in a meadow: and, behold, seven other kine came up after them out of the river, ill-favoured and lean-fleshed; and the ill-favoured and lean-fleshed kine did eat up the well-favoured and fat kine. So I awoke. And I slept and dreamed a second time; and, behold, seven ears of corn came up upon one stalk, full and good; and, behold, seven thin ears, and blasted with

the east wind, sprung up after them, and the seven thin ears devoured the seven rank and full ears." Joseph listened attentively to the king's address, and having warned him, that from God alone came the power of interpreting, explained, that the dreams in question foretold the occurrence of seven years of great plenty to be succeeded by seven years of extreme dearth; and that the vision was repeated a second time for the purpose of assuring Pharaoh that the events foretold in it would certainly be fulfilled. He accordingly advised that proper dispositions should be made to ameliorate the calamity with which Egypt was threatened, by the appointment of fit and trusty persons, whose business it should be to collect the surplus corn during the years of plenty, and lay it up in store against the years of famine.

Pharaoh was well pleased, both with the explanation of his dream and the sage counsel which accompanied it; and justly concluding that no one could be better qualified to carry through so arduous a business, he at once, and without reserve, committed it to Joseph's hand. Thus was the poor Hebrew slave taken from his prison, and advanced to the highest honours of the state. A title was bestowed upon him tantamount to that of prime minister amongst us; he was matched into a noble family, by receiving the hand of Asenath, the daughter of the High Priest or Prince of On, and it was proclaimed by order of Pharaoh, that to him honours should be paid throughout the extent of the Egyptian empire, inferior only to those which were offered to the king.

The prudence and uprightness which had distinguished Joseph in his adversity, suffered no diminution in his prosperity. The seven plentiful years no sooner began, than he made a progress through the kingdom, built granaries at different places, into which he caused large stores of corn to be in-

troduced, and appointed proper officers to see that no waste occurred: in a word, he managed matters so well, that when the period of famine arrived, as arrive it did in due time, Egypt was capable not only of supplying her own population, but of contributing to the necessities of neighbouring states.

Joseph was thus circumstanced: respected by his prince, beloved by the people whom he governed, and happy in the birth of two sons, whom he named Manasseh and Ephraim, when the providence of God brought about the accomplishment of that vision which, when communicated to his brethren many years before, had so violently offended them. There arrived among other suppliants for a supply of corn, ten of Joseph's brethren, the very ten who had conspired his death, and sold him as a slave to the Ishmaelites. So little does time appear to have affected them, that they were immediately recognised by Joseph, though the case was widely different with respect to himself. Years and a change of garb combined to efface any trace of resemblance, between the prime minister of Egypt and the boy arrayed in his coat of many colours; and the deception was the greater, that Joseph, to serve his own ends, chose to converse with them only through the medium of an interpreter. He accordingly received their advances with seeming backwardness; required them to give a strict account of themselves, accused them of being spies, confined them for three days in prison, and finally refused to treat them at all as true men, unless their brother Benjamin should be brought to him. But pretending at last to take pity upon them, he contented himself with releasing all except Simeon whom he professed to keep as a hostage, and then dismissed them with a positive prohibition not to think of returning unless they brought Benjamin along with them. The brothers departed, as we may easily believe, not overjoyed at what had happened:

but if their alarm was already great, it became greater by a thousand degrees, when one of them opening his sack at an inn to give his beast provender, found that the price of the corn which he had procured was in the sack's mouth. At that moment they looked upon themselves as objects of divine vengeance; their cruelty to Joseph recurred to them, and they believed that God now required his blood at their hands; and they returned to their father in a state of feeling such as no one need to envy. But their distress ended not there: Jacob was no sooner informed of Simeon's detention and of the conditions on which alone the governor would sanction their return into Egypt, than he bitterly upbraided them with being the cause to him of great and numerous misfortunes. "Me have ye bereaved of my children," said he, "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away also; all these things are against me." It was in vain that Reuben entreated him to be calm, offering his own sons as hostages that Benjamin should be safely returned. For a long while the heart-stricken patriarch would listen to no arguments, but in the bitterness of soul exclaimed, "My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he is left alone; and if mischief should befall him by the way in which ye go, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave."

But there is no contending against an enemy so gaunt and ruthless as famine. Their little stock of provisions was soon exhausted; nor was there any other depot from which to recruit it, except Egypt; and Jacob, rather than see his family perish of want gave at length a reluctant consent to the departure of Benjamin. With him in their hands the brothers proceeded on their way; not, however, without many misgivings as to the result; for though loaded with presents, and well prepared with excuses on the subject of the money that had been restored to them, we read

that they were more than half prepared to find themselves seized by the governor and reduced to a state of slavery. In this frame of mind they reached the city, where they immediately waited upon Joseph's steward, and produced both the price of the corn which they came now to purchase, and of that which they had formerly procured; but the steward at once relieved them from all anxiety, by confessing that he had restored to them their money, and by inviting them to come and dine with his master at noon. They accepted the invitation, and were all hospitably entertained; but it must have struck them with surprise to see that to Benjamin a far greater share of attention was paid than to any other. Finally Simeon was restored to them, changes of garments were presented to them, and their sacks being filled with corn, they were dismissed. The time was now however come, when Joseph, having sufficiently humbled his hardhearted brothers, determined to seal their pardon by making himself known to them. That this might be done with more effect, he caused his steward to insert privately into Benjamin's sack a drinking-cup of great value, which, being missed soon after the Israelites departed, excited great indignation among the Egyptians. The sons of Jacob were instantly pursued, and the stolen article being found in Benjamin's possession, they were all hurried back as prisoners. They came into Joseph's presence grievously and greatly alarmed; because, though perfectly conscious of their own innocence, they felt how little that consciousness was likely to avail them, and casting themselves in an abject posture at his feet, they listened with shame and mortification to the reproaches which he heaped upon them. But when at last Joseph declared that he should not consider all as equally guilty, and that he alone with whom the cup was found should be reduced to slavery, Judah arose, and in a strain of powerful and affecting eloquence, entreated,

on his father's account, that he might undergo the fate destined for Benjamin. Joseph's fortitude, which had long wavered, gave way before his brother's appeal; ordering all the attendants to quit the room, he burst into a flood of tears, and in the most affectionate and moving manner made himself known.

What remains of the history of Joseph, as far as his dealings with his kindred are connected with it, a few words will suffice to relate. Having assured his brothers that he freely forgave them, and that all things had taken place by the express will of the Almighty, he despatched them loaded with gifts for Jacob and the rest of the family; and made them the bearers of an urgent invitation that the patriarch would remove into Egypt, where his son's power was supreme. The aged Israel could scarcely credit their report, that Joseph was yet alive; nor was it till the waggons and carriages appeared which his son had sent for his conveyance, that he became convinced of the truth of the statement; but then "his spirit came to him again," and, thanking God with all his heart, he commenced his journey. Nor was that journey an unprosperous one, either in its progress or issue. He was welcomed by Joseph with the ardour of affection which seems ever to have belonged to him, and received kindly by king Pharaoh for Joseph's sake; and finally the land of Goshen, a district admirably suited to their pastoral habits, was assigned to him and to his children, as a residence. Thither, after solemnly blessing Pharaoh, he retired, with a family which reckoned in all exactly seventy souls.

Whilst Jacob and eleven of his sons dwelt peaceably in Goshen, Joseph continued to exercise the same sound judgment in the management of the affairs of Egypt which he had displayed in his first appointment to his present office. Fully aware that corn, if gratuitous, or cheaply bestowed, would, by the people at

large, be sadly wasted, he took care to exact for every bushel an adequate, if not an exorbitant, price; and, as their fields were every where waste and steril, he gradually removed by this means, into the royal treasury, all the gold and silver in the country. Next he accepted the husbandmen's cattle and implements in exchange for food; and lastly he purchased up the fee simple of all the land in the kingdom, with the exception of that portion which belonged to the priests, as well as the personal liberty of the former owners, who became from henceforth vassals to the prince. Why this was done, we are at no loss in discovering; whilst its effects were unquestionably the reverse of hurtful, either to the country or its inhabitants. We are informed by Diodorus Siculus, that previous to this period all the land of Egypt was divided among the king, the priesthood, and the army. The people, therefore (meaning hereby the cultivators and all who belonged not to one or other of these favoured classes), must have been from the beginning like the Russian serfs, mere chattels, who were not likely to suffer injury by being transferred from the vassalage in which they had hitherto been held by the soldiery to the common sovereign and father of the people. But supposing Diodorus to be mistaken in this respect, as a reference to the state of things in other eastern countries renders extremely probable, Joseph's arrangements will still be found to have conduced more to the ultimate prosperity of Egypt, than any others which could have been formed.

“By the policy of Joseph,” says Lord Valentia, “the whole of the land of Egypt, not occupied by the priests, became the property of the sovereign, and the people, with their children, his slaves; an event which, however unpropitious it may be in any other country, was necessary there, where every harvest depended on the Nile, and where an equal distribution

of its waters could alone produce a general cultivation. When the lands of Egypt were private property, would it be possible to induce individuals to sacrifice their own possessions, that they might be turned into canals for the public benefit? or when the canals were constructed, would it be possible to prevent the inhabitants of the upper provinces from drawing off more water than was requisite for their own use, and thereby injuring the cultivators lower down? But when the whole belonged to one man, the necessary canals would be constructed; the distribution of water would be guided by prudence; each district would receive its necessary proportion; and the collateral branches would then, as they are now, be opened only when the height of the river justified such an increase for the public benefit." All this is so self-evident, that it stands in need of no argument to support it. But there is another point in Joseph's proceedings deserving of notice. He did not retain the property in the soil which, for a particular purpose, he had purchased, but restored it, after that purpose had been served, to its original owners. What that purpose was, Lord Valentia has, we think, clearly pointed out; and though we are not bound to suppose that all the canals were dug, and Egypt rendered every where capable of irrigation during the short period of the famine's continuance, it is but fair to presume, that Joseph, upon restoring the lands, exacted from the people a pledge, that the works which he had begun should be completed, and the regulations which he had framed, strictly enforced. As to the reserve of one-fifth of the produce, every person acquainted with the customs of the east must know, that from some such source the chief portion of the revenue of every state has, from time immemorial, been derived. Thus the Hindoos appear under their own dynasties, to have contributed one-eighth of the produce to the

exigencies of the state ; under Aurungzebe the assessment was increased to one-third ; whilst our own government exacts a proportion which never falls short of two-thirds, and in some instances amounts to nine-tenths. If it be asked why the priests were exempted from the operation of this general law, two answers may be given, either of which seems quite adequate to meet the difficulty. It may be, that the fundamental constitution of the country, which secured to the priests certain tracts of land for the maintenance of the temples, and the supply of victims, placed them beyond the reach of minor enactments ; or, which is even more probable, the priests may have followed the example of Joseph, and laid up, during the years of plenty, sufficient stores against the years of want. In either case there is no difficulty in accounting for the fact, that whilst the rest of the people were compelled to sell their possessions, those of the priesthood continued as before ; although neither Joseph nor king Pharaoh, showed any undue or blamable partiality to that class of persons. In like manner there is nothing to startle or alarm in Moses's declaration that Joseph after purchasing their lands, " removed the people from one end of the borders of Egypt even unto the other end thereof." This was no act of cruelty, nor any exercise of arbitrary power ; it was the offspring of prudence and good sense, because the expression means no more than that Joseph caused the people to concentrate from a variety of distant places, round the granaries or storehouses which he had built, by which means their wants were more easily supplied, and all risk of waste owing to the transportation of grain from spot to spot obviated.

Joseph was thus occupied when intelligence reached him that his father Jacob lay at the point of death. Taking his two sons with him he hurried down to Goshen, where he arrived just in time to receive the

paternal blessing, which Jacob with more than ordinary solemnity, and acting under the guidance of the Divine Spirit, poured out upon the heads of all his children. At that solemn interview the fortunes of those tribes, of which the heads or representatives surrounded their father's couch, were distinctly foretold. Thus, Reuben, in punishment of his incest, was deprived for ever of his birthright, and denied the high honour of counting the Messiah in his future line; whilst to Simeon and Levi, who had taken the lead at the massacre of Shechem, all portions among their brothers in the land of Canaan were refused. Judah, on the contrary, was blessed with a fruitful country, and the possession of sovereign power, which it was foretold should never wholly pass from his house till Shiloh came; and Joseph was doubly rewarded by having each of his sons advanced to the honourable distinction of giving a name to a tribe. In a word, predictions were uttered, every one of which came in after-times fully to pass, and which allotted to those who heard them the several parts which it behoved them to act, in the great drama now visibly in progress.

Jacob had scarcely ceased to speak, when, to use the expressive words of Moses, "he gathered up his feet into the bed, and gave up the ghost." He was buried by his own desire in the cave of Machpelah, beside his father, being arrived at the great, but manifestly shortening, age of one hundred and forty-seven years. His funeral obsequies were attended with all the pomp and show which the court of Egypt could furnish; insomuch that a particular spot in the land of Canaan, where the procession temporarily halted, was called by the people of the land *Abel Mizraim*, or the *Mourning of the Egyptians*.

The sacred historian gives us no further account, either of Joseph or his brethren, except that the former made haste to dissipate the fears which the latter

experienced now that their father was removed from them; and hence we may reasonably conclude that they dwelt together on good terms, till, one after another, they paid the debt of nature. As to Joseph himself, having lived to the age of a hundred and ten years, and seen the descendants of his sons to the third generation, he summoned his relatives about him, and with the same solemnity which had marked the last scene in his father's life, assured them, "that God would surely visit them, and bring them up into the land of which he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." He accordingly requested that when they did move, they would not leave his bones behind them, and having received a solemn promise to that effect, he too "gave up the ghost." His body was embalmed and put into a coffin, where, probably in some open vault or cave, or other place of safety, it was preserved till the Exodus, or departure out of Egypt took place.

CHAPTER X.

History of Jacob's descendants.—Cruelty of Pharaoh.—Birth of Moses.—His early career.—Commissioned by God to deliver the people.—The plagues of Egypt.—Objections stated and answered.

A. M. 3548 to 3763.—B. C. 1863 to 1648.

FROM the era of Joseph's death, during a succession of sixty-four years, sacred history is little better than a blank. It fell not in with the plan which Moses had chalked out for himself, to describe minutely the manner in which the descendants of Israel spent their time at Goshen; but we may readily believe, that as long as a sense of the benefits which their country had received from Joseph continued fresh in the minds of the Egyptian monarchs, the relatives of that amiable patriarch would receive at least equitable treatment at their hands. No truth, however, stands better attested than that he who confers benefits upon a people at large, need not look for any lasting return of gratitude; and that which occurs every day among the polished nations of Europe was not very likely not to happen in a ruder and more remote age of the world. The increasing numbers of the Israelites began by degrees to excite the apprehensions and jealousy of those whose guests they were; nor, if a few facts in Egyptian history be taken into consideration, is it very surprising that the case should have been so.

It has been mentioned, that among other methods

which Joseph adopted to try, and perhaps to punish his brothers, he accused them, when they first presented themselves in his presence, of being spies. This was doubtless a very harsh epithet to bestow upon them; and to such as have not looked into the earlier annals of Egypt, it may appear a very unmeaning one; but the truth is, that none could be more appropriate in the mouth of an Egyptian statesman who was, or pretended to be, ignorant of the real condition and lineage of the individuals before him. We learn from Herodotus, and other ancient writers, that Egypt was, on a certain occasion, overrun by a horde of pastoral people, the leaders of whom have, for distinction's sake, been denominated Shepherd-kings. This invasion, as Dr. Hales as clearly proved, occurred in the reign of Thamnon, about three hundred years previous to Joseph's arrival; and was conducted by a tribe of Cushite shepherds from Arabia, who cruelly oppressed the country, and laid the heaviest, and most galling burdens upon its inhabitants. The native princes, wearied out by their tyranny, at last rebelled, and after a struggle of thirty years' continuance, succeeded, about twenty-seven years prior to Joseph's administration, in expelling them from their territory and driving them into Palestine, where they became what are in Scripture called the Philistines. But the memory of their tyranny must have been still fresh in the minds of the Egyptians, as well as the apprehension that they might yet endeavour to regain a footing where they had once been masters; and hence Joseph's charge against his brothers, was exactly such as an Egyptian statesman might be expected to bring against persons coming from Philistia, or the plains of Mamre.

In like manner, though for a time the suspicions of the Egyptians were allayed, these, as the remembrance of Joseph and his good offices became faint, would naturally acquire fresh strength, whilst it was continually borne in

mind, that this colony of strangers, whose extraordinary increase rendered them daily more and more formidable, had originally come among them from the country possessed by their ancient oppressors. Nor is this all: supposing the Egyptians to have been satisfied, that as the Israelites had originally no connexion with the Shepherd-kings, so were they bound to them by no tie of alliance or consanguinity, it must have, nevertheless, occurred to them, that between themselves and the strangers no natural bond of union existed; and hence that the strangers were just as likely, in the event of an invasion from any foreign power, to take part with their enemies, as with themselves. That such were, in point of fact, the opinions of the Egyptians, we have the authority of Moses himself for pronouncing. After informing us that "the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty," and that "the land was filled with them," the inspired historian goes on to say, that "there rose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph. And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we. Come on, let us deal wisely with them: lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land." Doubtless the more enlightened policy of modern times would have dictated an attempt, under such circumstances, to bring the two nations into one, by extending to the strangers the full benefit of citizenship, and instituting close and intimate alliances with them. But a line of conduct so equitable as this, was not to be expected in an age of more than semi-barbarism. The Egyptians could devise no other means of securing themselves, except by exterminating the tribes of whom they were afraid; and as that could scarcely be attempted openly, they fell upon the fol-

lowing device for gradually bringing it about: The Israelites, who had hitherto enjoyed the fullest extent of personal freedom, were suddenly, and upon no pretext of wrong, reduced to a state of vassalage: they were declared to be the absolute property of the crown; and the whole of the male population being told off into gangs, was employed night and day under appointed taskmasters, upon public works, and driven like cattle into the fields; they were compelled to dig clay, to make bricks; to bear burdens, and to build cities; whilst at the same time a heavy tribute was exacted from them, and the greatest cruelties were exercised towards them. This was done under the expectation that multitudes would perish from over exertion, whilst all would become so enfeebled, as that the progress of population would be checked, if not arrested: but the very opposite effects were found to follow; for the more they suffered from the tyranny of their masters, the more prolific the women proved to be. Pharaoh was disappointed at the issue of his devices, but by no means inclined to acquiesce in it. On the contrary, finding other measures fail, he directed the midwives to put to death every male child of the Hebrews, reserving the females only for the gratification of his own and his people's lusts; and finding that they scrupled not to evade, on frivolous pretences, paying obedience to so sanguinary a decree, he extended it, without reservation, to every person among his subjects. Nay, he went further, by erecting for the unhappy Israelites, fixed habitations, in lieu of the tents and booths which they were formerly accustomed to inhabit, for the express purpose of rendering them more exposed to the inspection of his searchers; and he issued peremptory orders, that all the boys should, as soon as they were born, be cast, without fail, into the Nile.

Such was the political condition of the Israelites

when that event befell, upon which, more than upon any other, their fate as a nation, may be said to have turned. There was a certain man of the tribe of Levi, by name Amram, who had married one Jochebed, of the same tribe, several years previous to the promulgation of these sanguinary decrees, and who, at the period of their promulgation, was the father of two children, a daughter named Miriam, and a son called Aaron. About two years after the building of the houses referred to in the preceding paragraph, Amram's wife, Jochebed, proved again to be with child, and in due time she was delivered of a male infant, of surpassing beauty and elegance of form. As was natural, the poor woman became exceedingly anxious to save her boy, and she contrived by some means or another, to conceal him for three entire months; but at the end of that period, perceiving that his detection was inevitable, she determined to trust him to the mercy of the elements, rather than permit him to fall into the hands of the Egyptians. With this view she constructed a little bark, or boat of rushes, which she plastered within and without with bitumen, till it became completely water-tight; and, covering up the infant within it, she left it among the flags by the river-side, having placed his sister in a convenient spot for watching the event. The babe had lain thus exposed but a short time, when Pharaoh's daughter, attended by her maids of honour, came down to the river to bathe. The princess instantly espied the basket, caused it to be brought to her, and opened it; upon which the child, looking in her face, began to cry, and the hearts of all who beheld him were touched. There could be no doubt as to the lineage of the infant, or the causes which led to his exposure; yet natural feeling was too powerful for political prudence, and the daughter of Pharaoh instantly adopted him as her own. Nor was she long left at a loss how immediately to dispose of

him. His sister, Miriam, who had, as if by accident, joined the group, hearing the princess inquire of her attendants respecting a nurse, offered her services to procure one, and these being accepted, she brought his mother, into whose hands the child was intrusted. Finally, the name of Moses was given to him in commemoration of his deliverance from drowning by her who henceforth took upon herself the charge of his education; and he was intrusted to his natural parents as the *élève* of the King of Egypt's favourite daughter.

Many traditions have been circulated by the Jews touching the early career of their illustrious lawgiver. That he was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians, Moses himself affirms; whilst his countrymen, more anxious to increase his reputation, than careful to confine themselves to facts, have circulated numerous, and some of them not very probable stories of his great valour and sagacity. Of these it is not necessary to offer here even a meagre outline, more especially as the reader will find a tolerably circumstantial detail of them in Josephus; but of one fact no doubt can be entertained, that had he chosen to act the traitor towards God and his countrymen, the highest honours which the king could bestow would have been his reward. Moses, however, had not spent his boyish years unprofitably under the roof of his father. An impression was then made upon him such as all the splendour of a royal court failed to efface; and he scarcely attained to the period of middle life, ere he began seriously to devise schemes for the deliverance of his oppressed kindred.

It happened on a certain occasion as he walked abroad, his mind filled with these patriotic ideas, that he saw an Egyptian exercise upon an Israelite some acts of barbarous and wanton cruelty. Moses's indignation was roused; and having ascertained that there were no eyewitnesses near, he took the part of his

countryman, slew the Egyptian, and buried his body in the sand. This was an act which could leave no doubt as to his dispositions in favour of the oppressed house of Jacob; and Moses probably flattered himself that it would induce his countrymen to place in him implicit reliance; but he was mistaken. On the very day after, as he endeavoured to arbitrate between two Israelites, one of whom sought to wrong or injure the other, he was rudely reminded that he bore no commission as a judge; whilst an insinuation was thrown out that if he persisted in interfering, the death of the Egyptian would be made public. Moses felt that it was no longer safe for him to continue an inhabitant of Egypt; he fled in all haste beyond the Red Sea into the country of Midian, and thus narrowly escaped the fate which Pharaoh had determined to inflict upon him.

Moses had just entered into the plains of Midian when he beheld seven young women, whilst in the act of watering their flocks, rudely assaulted, and driven from the wells by a band of shepherds; he immediately hastened to their assistance, put the ruffians to the flight, and helped the maidens to draw water anew. The damsels whom he had succoured proved to be the daughters of Jethro, the prince (or as our version has it) the priest of Midian, who was no sooner made acquainted with the stranger's gallant interference than he invited him home; and having made trial of his fidelity as a servant, finally rewarded it by giving to him in marriage Zipporah, one of the maidens whom he had defended. By this union he was in due time made the father of two sons, one of whom he named Gershom, a word signifying a stranger, the other he called Eliezer, that is, God my help.

Whilst Moses thus found a home and a family among strangers, the King of Egypt, by whom his life had been threatened, died, and was succeeded by

a prince in no respect inferior to himself, either in cruelty or in impiety. Under him the miseries of the Israelites increased every day, till their very lives became a burden to them; and they cried to Heaven for that help which man seemed indisposed to grant. They did not cry in vain. The time had arrived when it suited the councils of the Most High to separate the descendants of Abraham from the Egyptians; and as Moses was the destined instrument by which that separation should be effected, no great while elapsed ere he received a summons not to be misunderstood. It was in a peculiar manner the province of Moses to attend to his father-in-law's flocks; and he appears, on a certain occasion, to have followed some wanderers as far into the desert as Mount Horeb, where he beheld a spectacle which could not fail powerfully to excite his curiosity. He saw a bush enveloped in a flame, yet, "behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed." There was something so extraordinary in this phenomenon, that Moses experienced a strong desire to investigate it, and was advancing for that purpose, when a voice suddenly commanded him to halt, and to put his shoes from off his feet, because the spot on which he stood was holy ground. Then followed a solemn declaration that it was the God of his fathers who addressed him; that the cry of the Israelites had pierced through the clouds, and that the Lord had come down for the express purpose of delivering them from their cruel bondage. Finally Moses was informed that God had chosen him as a fit instrument for carrying the Divine wishes into effect, and that he should forthwith be despatched to the court of Pharaoh to demand, in the name of the Most High, the liberation of his people.

Whether a recollection of the deed which had driven him as an exile into Midian operated upon the mind of Moses, or whether a distrust of himself, arising from

constitutional modesty, caused him to shrink from the important office thus intrusted to him, we are not informed; but it is stated that so far from accepting God's commission with the cheerfulness which might have been expected, he expressed himself extremely averse to undertake it. "Who am I," said he, "that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" and though God assured him that he should be with him, even then his diffidence abated not. "Behold," said he, "when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, the God of your fathers hath sent me unto you, and they say unto me, what is his name, what shall I say unto them?" This was undoubtedly a very remarkable question to be put by a descendant of the "father of the faithful" to the Maker of heaven and earth; but a few words will suffice to show that it was by no means an unnatural one. It is well known that at the period to which our present history refers, polytheism, and the notions of tutelary gods, prevailed largely throughout the world, and that the Egyptians even more grossly than any other people, encouraged them. From the pollution thence arising the Israelites had not kept themselves free; nay, there is good cause to believe that much of the oppression to which they were then subject was permitted by God to come upon them, in punishment of their too ready acquiescence in the superstitions of their masters. But if the mass of the Israelites, who dwelt apart from the Egyptians, were thus contaminated, it would have been strange had Moses, brought up in the royal court, escaped; indeed we need no further proof than this very singular conversation supplies, to assure us that he was not free from the error into which others had fallen. Hence his singular inquiry as to the name of the Deity who then condescended to converse with him, and his frank acknowledgment that unless that name

were publicly made known, he would receive no attention from the persons to whom he was about to be sent.

To the doctrine of polytheism, or to the *heathen* notions of tutelary deities, the God of the universe could of course give no countenance, though it is evident that, throughout the whole Mosaic economy, he so far humoured the prejudices of the Israelites as to make them the objects of his peculiar care in this world ; but God has, in every dispensation of his towards men, acted with the strictest regard to the capabilities and condition of his creatures. In this spirit he bore with the weakness of the people by assuming to himself a name ; and it is worthy of remark, that the very name which he adopted conveyed a marked correction to the superstitious weakness which it seemed to humour. God's answer was, I AM THAT I AM, and his further injunction ran in the following strain : " Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." It is scarcely necessary to add, that as the religion of names arose out of an idolatrous polytheism, so the title assumed here, which implies *eternity* and *self-existence*, directly opposes that superstition.

In spite, however, of so much condescension on God's part, and his repeated assurances of divine protection, Moses still shrunk back from his duty, and objected that the people would not pay heed to him, nor credit his assertion that the Lord had sent him. To obviate this he was commanded to cast his rod upon the ground, which became instantly changed into a serpent, though, on his stretching forth his hand to grasp it again, it returned to its original form ; whilst his hand being thrust into his bosom once became leprous, and in repeating the operation was cured. These things God assured him he should

be permitted to do for the purpose of convincing the people that he bore a commission from on high ; and the power to work even greater miracles, should such be needed, was graciously conceded to him. Yet Moses continued, as before, to decline the trust. He reminded the Deity that he possessed no eloquence, nor any talent of persuasion ; and ventured still to hold out, until God had reminded him that the same power which formed the mouth could gift it with the faculty of speech. God's indignation was at length excited. He peremptorily desired that Moses should obey his will, taking with him Aaron as his spokesman ; and Moses finding that to hold out longer would tend only to his own destruction, prepared, though not without reluctance, to do as God commanded.

Such was the termination of the first memorable interview between Moses and the Angel of the Covenant, after which the former hastened home to Jethro, and demanded permission to visit his brethren in Egypt. It was freely granted ; and the great law-giver, with his wife and two sons, set forward on his momentous journey. But he had not proceeded far ere it was manifestly signified, that he who was about to act so conspicuous a part in God's counsels, must not himself be found wanting in deference to God's laws ; for an angel meeting him, threatened to put him to death, because the youngest of his sons continued uncircumcised. Zipporah immediately took a sharp flint, with which she performed the operation, repeating over the child that form of words which it was customary to use on such occasions ; whereupon the angel departed, after he had given signs that God's anger was appeased. In the mean while Aaron, under the guidance of a divine impulse, had come out to seek his brother ; and met him at the foot of Horeb, called in the Bible the

Mount of God. Here Moses made known to him all that had passed between Jehovah and himself, explaining to him the commission which he had received, and exhibiting his power to work miracles; after which the brothers continued their journey together, till they reached the land of Goshen. Arrived here, they lost no time in calling together the elders or heads of tribes, to whom Aaron made known the design which they were appointed to execute; and as the people expressed themselves willing to obey Moses as their leader, and grateful to God for his goodness, nothing remained but to lay a similar declaration before the Egyptian monarch.

It had been distinctly stated by God, when ordering Moses on his great undertaking, that Pharaoh would not willingly allow the people to go; and it very soon appeared that, in describing the obstinacy of that monarch's temper, God had committed no error. So far from complying with the brothers' request, or permitting the Israelites to proceed three days' journey into the wilderness to sacrifice to their God, Pharaoh accused the petitioners of traitorous designs; and, declaring that the people had become discontented because their burdens were too light, he resolved to increase them. Hitherto the straw had been supplied from public stores, which was required in making bricks, now all such aid was refused, yet the unhappy Israelites were punished because they failed in fabricating the same quantity as before. The Israelites finding themselves not only not delivered, but more oppressed than ever, in consequence of Moses's interference, began to murmur loudly against him, and he, with an inexcusable want of true faith, remonstrated warmly with Jehovah. With his complaints, groundless as they were, the Lord was pleased not to be offended. On the contrary, he desired Moses to renew his demand, warning

him, at the same time, not to expect an immediate compliance with it; and directed that Aaron should take the rod in his hand, and perform in Pharaoh's presence the miracle which Moses had originally performed at Horeb. The brothers hesitated not to obey God in either particular. Moses again made his demand, which Aaron strove to enforce by casting his rod upon the ground and changing it into a serpent; but as there happened to be jugglers by, who succeeded in imitating the miracle, Pharaoh treated the whole scene with ridicule.

From this time forth, during many continuous weeks, Egypt was a theatre for the display of God's chastising power, in a degree more wonderful and more varied than ever occurred before or since upon earth. In the first place the water of the Nile, with all the lakes and pools connected with it, were, at the command of Moses, changed into blood, and the people were driven to dig wells in the sand, in order to procure the means of quenching their thirst. In the next place, swarms of frogs were brought up, which infested every house, from the palace of the king to the hut of the slave; and when, at Pharaoh's urgent entreaty, Moses prayed that they might be removed, the land stank by reason of the heaps of dead. In both these instances, as well as in the case of the serpent, the magicians, we are told, "did so likewise;" but it was not so with the third, or any of the succeeding judgments. Aaron stretched out his hand and smote the dust, which became lice throughout all the land of Egypt, an act of power which the magicians could not counterfeit, and in which they were in consequence compelled to acknowledge that the finger of God was discernible. Still Pharaoh continued obstinate, and his devoted country was successively visited with plagues of murrain, or mortality of the cattle; of flies polluting

every thing on which they settled ; of boils breaking out, among others, upon the magicians themselves, by the casting up of a handful of ashes from the furnace into the air ; of rain, hail, thunder and lightning, laying waste the fields and breaking the trees ; of locusts which devoured every green thing which the hail had spared, and darkness so dense, that for three entire days no Egyptian “ arose from his place.” All these evils falling upon the king and his people, whilst the Israelites were wonderfully protected from them, could not but amaze even the impious Pharaoh, and he more than once endeavoured to compound with Moses on the subject of the liberation of his countrymen. But finding the prophet inexorable, his anger gained the mastery even over fear, and he drove the brothers from him, with a stern injunction not again to see his face on pain of death.

There remained but one judgment more which God had determined to pour forth upon the heads of Pharaoh and his subjects, and that was a terrible one. In spite of the prohibition which he had recently received, Moses went again to Pharaoh and assured him, that unless he instantly permitted the Israelites to depart, with their wives, children, cattle, and effects, he would that night cut off the firstborn of every man and beast throughout his empire. How the Egyptian monarch could doubt the realization of this threat, after so many proofs had been given of Moses’s veracity, we should indeed find it difficult to conceive, were we not assured that he acted under the influence of a judicial delusion ; but that such a delusion was now actually upon him, the language of Scripture asserts. In the spirit of an insane person, he not only refused to obey God, but drove his messengers from him ; who fled to avoid the consequences of a fury which was no longer controlled by reason.

Four days previous to this interview, God had fully instructed Moses and Aaron as to the line of conduct which he desired the Israelites to pursue; and they issued a proclamation for the establishment of the Passover, in the following terms: It was directed that each family, or in the event of a single family proving inadequate in point of numbers, that two families joined together, should, on the tenth day of the month, take a lamb or a kid, shut it up till the fourteenth day, and kill it towards evening; that the lamb or kid should be a male of the first year, without blemish; that its blood should be caught in a dish, and sprinkled, by means of a bunch of hyssop, on the lintel and sideposts of the door; that no one belonging to the family should, after this was done, venture abroad during the remainder of that night; but having roasted the lamb entire, without mutilation of members or breaking a bone, that they should eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs; that if ought remained after they had satisfied themselves, that they should not give it to a stranger, but burn it; and lastly, that they should eat it like men prepared for an immediate journey, with their loins girded, shoes on their feet, and staves in their hands. Such is a brief account of the solemn feast of the Passover, as it has ever since been practised among the tribes of Israel, and of which God declared himself the founder, for the following reason: "For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night," said he, "and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast. And the blood shall be unto you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, the plague shall not come unto you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt." The eventful day no sooner arrived, than the Israelites made haste to follow the directions which Moses had given them. They slew the passover, sprinkled the lintels and side-

posts with blood, and feasted upon the sacrifice, and they were yet employed in the latter proceeding, when about midnight there arose all at once a sound of lamentation from one end of Egypt to the other. God's Destroying Angel had so faithfully performed his task, that in every dwelling one at least lay dead; and the night-air rang with the wailings of sorrow, not less than with the cry of terror. Among others, Pharaoh himself felt the blow; and sending for Moses and Aaron in haste, he commanded them to depart without delay, with all that desired to follow them, from his country. The prophets were not slow in obeying this welcome edict. They had already instructed the people to borrow from the Egyptians jewels, and gold and silver in abundance, and the Egyptians now voluntarily pressed upon them more than they sought, if not more than they needed; but there was no bribe which the latter were not willing to offer, in order at once to free themselves from the presence of men, whom they justly regarded as the cause of their sorrow. Thus at the dead of night, and in great haste, the journey of the Israelites began; which was destined not to come to an end, till all who had then arrived at man's estate were returned into dust.

As we are well aware that several of the facts recorded in the preceding details have given rise to doubts and scruples, even in ingenuous minds, we cannot think of bringing the present chapter to a close without endeavouring to place at least the principal of these in their true light. The facts to which we allude are, first, the assertion that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, and that he raised him up for the purpose of afflicting him; second, the success with which the magicians are represented as imitating the miracles performed by Moses; and lastly, the whole history of the terrible judgments inflicted upon the Egyptians, including the behaviour of the Israelites immediately

previous to their departure. These things are sometimes felt to affect the truth of Divine revelation, by derogating, or appearing to derogate, from the power and character of its author. The difficulties of which commentators complain, respecting the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, arise entirely from the mistakes of our translators. In the original, and in all the ancient versions without a single exception, as well as in the most judicious modern translations, such as those of Coverdale, Le Clerc, the Geneva Bible, &c., Pharaoh is expressly said to have hardened his own heart at different times. He did so after the miracles which Moses wrought before him at the second interview, as well as after his release from the first five plagues; nor is it till after the sixth plague that God is for the first time represented as hardening Pharaoh's heart. Now there are two points of view in which this interference on God's part may be regarded; by either of which all doubts or scruples will be removed. Moses may mean to teach, that God in punishment of Pharaoh's repeated impieties, placed him at last as the devils are placed, beyond the hope of redemption; and if so, surely he did no more than under the circumstances of the case he was justified in doing; or the phrase may amount to a mere declaration, that this wicked man was left "to eat the bitter fruit of his own way, and to be filled with his own devices." In either case God's justice is vindicated; for there cannot be a doubt that the Divine declaration, "I will harden Pharaoh's heart," though uttered at Mount Horeb, related entirely to what was done at last, "that he might multiply his signs and wonders in the land of Egypt." In like manner the expression, "for this purpose have I raised thee up," is obscure only because it does not convey the true meaning of the original. There God's assertion is, "for this cause have *I kept thee alive* (when the pestilence might have cut thee off, as the

murrain did thy cattle), for to show thee my power; and that my name may be declared in all the earth."

With respect to the second difficulty, namely, that which rests upon the facility with which the Egyptian magicians are represented as imitating the miracles wrought by Moses, it may, we think, without much trouble, be satisfactorily explained. Without going so far as positively to contradict the host of commentators, who maintain [that evil spirits were permitted for wise purposes to aid the magicians in their efforts, we have no hesitation in asserting that for such demoniacal interference there is, in the instance before us, no necessity whatever. It has been well observed by a learned author,* that the daily exploits of our dealers in *phantasmagoria* afford abundant proof that false images may be produced, and made to move, walk, and apparently to speak, without the aid of supernatural agency, whilst an expert juggler appears not only to transport bodies from one place to another, but even to substitute one thing for another, in the very hand of him who is determined, if possible, to detect his impostures. Now it is a fact which cannot be questioned, that in Egypt and other regions of Africa, they have the art of charming,† or rendering innoxious the most deadly serpents, so as to handle them with impunity; and if the same art was possessed by the magicians in the days of Moses, what was to hinder them, prepared as they were for the experiment, to substitute with the dexterity of a modern juggler, their tamed serpents for their rods.

In like manner, they might easily appear to change water into blood and to produce frogs; for if Moses

* See Bishop Gleig's edition of Stackhouse's History of the Bible.

† In India the natives possess the same art, though we believe that with them as well as in Africa, the fangs, or poison-bearing teeth of the reptiles, are drawn.

gave in these instances, as he certainly did in others, previous intimation of the nature of the miracles which were to be wrought, the magicians might easily provide themselves with a quantity of blood, and a number of frogs sufficient to answer their purpose of deceiving the people. Beyond this, however, their power could not go. It stopped where that of all dealers in legerdemain must stop, at the failure of proper materials with which to work. Egypt abounds with serpents; blood could be easily procured in a quantity equal to the water which could then be found, on which the experiment was to be made; and without difficulty they might have frogs in abundance from the river or the canals. But when Moses produced lice from the dust of the ground, the magicians, who had it not in their power to collect a sufficient number of these insects, were compelled to own this to be the finger of God. In our translation it is indeed said, that when Aaron cast down his rod, and it became a serpent, the magicians also did in like manner with their enchantments; but the words translated *did in like manner*, and *did so*, may indicate nothing more than the attempt, for the very same words are employed to denote what they did in the case of the lice, in which they confessed that they had failed. It is to be observed, too, that the original term rendered *their enchantments*, being derived from a root which signifies *to hide*, or *cover*, fitly expresses the secret deceptions of *legerdemain* or slight of hand, to impose on the spectators. There is, therefore, no necessity for calling in the aid of supernatural agency to the magicians on this occasion; nor is it probable that they themselves really laid claim to such.

But though the magicians themselves neither possessed, nor to the initiated pretended to possess, any real power over the elements; it is in the highest degree probable, that even by Pharaoh their juggling

tricks were believed to be the result of an intimate communion with the tutelary gods of his country. The superstition of those times appears to have been more gross and more extravagant than in almost any other age of the world; and the whole of Pharaoh's proceedings clearly imply, that he was by no means free from its influence. Thus, when threatened by Moses that certain extraordinary things would be done, as well in punishment of his obstinacy as in testimony of the divine authority of the speaker, he summoned to his presence the chief of those persons who were in the habit of deceiving the people, in the full persuasion that their intimate acquaintance with the mysteries of nature, or their spells and incantations, would be found equal if not superior to his. Nor is it to be imagined that the whole series of operations occurred without the especial permission of the Most High. To establish the authority of Moses among his countrymen, and to ensure their reception of the laws which God, through his means, intended to impose upon them, it was necessary that the clearest proofs should be afforded of his divine mission; and for this no more appropriate means could be devised than those which his triumph over the Egyptian magicians or jugglers supplied.

The third and last point of which we have spoken, as operating uneasily on the minds of many well-disposed persons, bears reference to the judgments inflicted by God upon the Egyptians; and the behaviour of the Israelites in borrowing jewels, which it was not their intention to return. Before endeavouring to show that the plagues inflicted upon the Egyptians were at once rightly merited, and most appropriate in kind, it may be well to explain away the difficulty which is supposed to lie in the concluding clause of this sentence.

In the first place, it may admit of a question whether the expression *borrowed*, be in this instance rightly employed. Many competent judges contend,

that the original implies rather a free gift on the part of the Egyptians, who had by this time become so solicitous for the departure of the Israelites, that they bribed them with gold and jewels to be gone; and, if this interpretation be correct, then is the entire transaction very satisfactorily accounted for. But supposing the case to be otherwise, no one can doubt that the Israelites possessed a strong claim upon the revenues of Egypt; in consequence of the services which they had performed during many years of personal bondage. This, however, was little likely to be recognised by a tyrant, who had acted towards them as Pharaoh did, and hence they cannot be accused of behaving dishonourably because they extracted from the coffers of the people at large, what they possessed no means of wringing from the public treasury. To understand aright the peculiar fitness of the destructive miracles wrought by Moses in Egypt, it will be necessary to bear in mind the moral and religious condition of that country at the period of their performance. Though not the birthplace of idolatry, which, as has been shown elsewhere, began in Chaldea, Egypt seems to have become at a very early period, deeply tinctured with that vice; whilst, in the extent to which they carried it, all ancient writers allow that no people can be brought into a comparison with the Egyptians. That brute-worship originated in Egypt can, we think, be as little doubted, as that it gradually arose out of the use of hieroglyphical writing, and at all events we know that it was practised there to a degree in itself irreconcilable with the exercise of common reason. Herodotus informs us, that besides the great gods, Isis, Osiris, and the Nile, the Egyptians worshipped the sacred bull, the crocodile, the ram, the ibis, with other beasts and reptiles, too numerous to mention; whilst they conducted their worship with the most scrupulous regard to external cleanliness and decorum. Let us

see now of what nature the plagues sent upon this people were; and what object, besides that of punishment, they had a tendency to serve.

The first plague, to which God condemned Egypt to submit, was that of the conversion of the waters into blood, when Moses smote the river with the rod, which had a few days previously been changed into a serpent. Among any people this would have afforded proof enough of Divine agency; but it was in a peculiar manner calculated to bring this conviction home to the superstitious Egyptians, who considered the Nile as one of their greatest gods, and all the fish that it contained as subordinate deities. How great must have been their horror when they beheld one of their most revered gods, to whom they believed themselves indebted for the fertility of their country, converted at the command of a servant of Jehovah into a substance which none of their priests could touch, or even approach without pollution.

The second plague was that of the frogs, another source of pollution which this very river sent forth so abundantly, as to prevent the possibility of avoiding it.

The third plague was that of the lice, which came upon every man and beast throughout the land. Now if it be remembered that no man could approach the altars of Egypt, on whom so impure an insect harboured, and that the priests, to guard against the slightest risk of contamination, wore only linen garments, and shaved their heads and bodies every day, the severity of this miracle as a judgment upon Egyptian idolatry may be imagined. Whilst it lasted, no act of worship could be performed; and so keenly was this felt, that the very magicians exclaimed "this is the finger of God."

Of the fourth plague one of the inferior deities himself was made the instrument. Swarms of flies crowded every spot and contaminated the air, till Pharaoh, in

a paroxysm of affright, consented that the people should be permitted to go and serve the Lord.

The fifth plague, the murrain among the cattle, struck at once at the root of the entire system of brute-worship. Neither Osiris, nor Isis, nor Ammon, nor Pan, possessed power to save his representative and the sacred bull, and ram, and heifer, and he-goat, were swept away by the same malady which destroyed others.

Of the peculiar fitness of the sixth plague the reader will receive a better impression when he is reminded that in Egypt there were several altars, on which human sacrifices were occasionally offered, when it was desired to propitiate Typhon, or the evil principle. From the description given of the persons selected as proper victims, that they must be of a fair complexion, with light hair, we have good ground for believing that the Israelites were doomed, during their state of bondage, to supply the demands of that horrid superstition; for though the Israelites were not what we should term fair, their hair and complexion were many shades lighter than those of the Egyptians. These victims being burned alive, their ashes were gathered together by the officiating priest, and thrown up into the air in order that a blessing might be entailed upon every place to which an atom of the consecrated dust might be wafted. By the direction of Jehovah, Moses took a handful of ashes of the furnace, that is of the sacred furnace, and casting them into the air, there came, instead of a blessing, boils and blains of a peculiarly obnoxious description, upon all the people of the land. Neither priests nor magicians escaped, and thus was the absolute inability of Typhon to protect his worshippers effectually shown.

In the seventh plague, that of the lightning and hail, Isis and Osiris, the one the god of water, the other the god of fire, were made the active instruments. That

this must have affected the Egyptians with more than ordinary horror, every one may perceive who remembers, that Egypt is blessed with a sky uncommonly serene; that in the greatest part of it, no rain falls from one end of the year to the other; and that even in such districts as are watered from on high, a slight and transient shower is all that the inhabitants ever witness.

The eighth plague was that of the locusts, a judgment, which, whilst it afflicted the country with a serious evil, exhibited the weakness of the gods Isis and Serapis, whose province it was to keep these terrible insects from the land.

The ninth plague was directed against that species of superstition, which, as it first broke in upon true religion, so it seems to have held throughout the highest place in the estimation of the heathen. Light, that great god of Chaldea, was shown to be a mere creature in the hands of the Most High, and both the sun and the moon were veiled during three days and nights, from the eyes of their astonished worshippers.

The tenth and most tremendous judgment of all was, as indeed it is represented to be, a perfect application of the law of reprisal to the stubborn and rebellious Egyptians. "Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my firstborn. Let my son go, that he may serve me, and if thou refuse to let him go, behold I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn." Before this threat was carried into execution, every effort had been made to subdue the obstinacy of Pharaoh. Judgment after judgment had been sent upon him and his subjects, by none of which were the children of Israel affected. His gods were shown to be no gods—his sacred river was made the source of defilement to him. The sun refused him its light, the locusts devoured his crops, yet none of all these things succeeded in convincing Pharaoh that Jehovah was supreme throughout the

universe, and that it was his wisdom to obey. Then, and not till then, God raised his arm to strike, and the strength and the pride of Egypt perished in one night. "Other miracles might have been wrought," says the divine, from whom we lately quoted, "equally well calculated to prove the existence and power of that God, in whose name Moses wrought them, but I do not think that it could ever have entered into the heart of man to conceive a series of miracles so well adapted to prove the unity of the Godhead, and the impious folly of polytheism, as were the ten plagues sent upon the idolatrous Egyptians; and he, who does not view them in this light, cannot feel half the force of the evidence which they afford of the divine origin of the Mosaic dispensation."

There is but one other matter recorded in Holy Writ, of which we consider it necessary, previous to the continuation of our narrative, to take notice. It is asserted by Moses, that "the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years," and that "at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day, it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt." How are these statements to be reconciled, first with the promise of God to Abraham, that his descendants should be afflicted for *four hundred years*, and secondly, with the well-established fact that the sojourn of the children of Israel in the district of Goshen included only two hundred and fifteen years.

With respect to God's prediction, it may suffice to observe, that there neither was, nor could be any intention on the Divine part to specify to a day, or an hour, the exact portion of time referred to. It is customary still, as it probably has been ever since language was first granted to man, to speak of periods of time loosely and generally, more especially when these

include, not one or two, or twelve or twenty years, but centuries. Hence God's assurance to Abraham, that "his seed should be a stranger in a land, not theirs, and should serve the inhabitants thereof, and that they should afflict them four hundred years," but that in the fourth generation they should return again to Canaan.

In reference to the second difficulty, it is worthy of notice, that though the sacred history certainly does state that "the sojourning of the children of Israel in the land of Egypt was four hundred and thirty years," we are by no means bound to receive this as a declaration, that they dwelt in Egypt during the whole of that time.

The Israelites came into Egypt, with Jacob, their father, A.M. 3548, and quitted it, A.M. 3763, consequently they dwelt there exactly two hundred and fifteen years; we are therefore compelled to believe that the expression of Moses refers to the entire period of their existence, as strangers and wanderers, as well in Canaan as in Egypt. Nor are authorities wanting to support us in this opinion. In the Samaritan text, for example, it is said "now the inhabiting of the children of Israel, whereby they inhabited in the land of Canaan and in the land of Egypt, were four hundred and thirty years," upon which Dr. Prideaux has observed, that "the additions herein, do manifestly mend the text, they make it more clear and intelligible, and add nothing to the Hebrew copy, but what must be understood by the reader to make out its sense." Is it not in the highest degree probable, that the words which we find in the Samaritan copy, once held their places in the Hebrew also, and that they were dropped only by the hurry or carelessness of transcribers.

The following abstract of periods will show at a glance how God's predictions to Abraham were verified:

	Years.
From the time of the promise, when Abraham was in his seventy-fifth year, to the birth of Isaac - - - - -	25
From the birth of Isaac to the birth of Jacob	60
From the birth of Jacob to his descent into Egypt with his family - - - - -	130
	—215
The Israelites sojourned in Egypt during Joseph's life - - - - -	71
From the death of Joseph to the birth of Moses - - - - -	64
From the birth of Moses to the Exode -	80
	—215
Making in all, from the granting of the promise to the day of its fulfilment, exactly	- 430

CHAPTER XI.

Departure of the Israelites.—Passage of the Red Sea.—Delivery of the Law.—Apostacies of the Israelites.—Rebellions of Korah and Miriam.—Wars with the Nations on the borders of Canaan.—Balaam's Prophecy.—Objections stated and answered.

A. M. 3763 to 3803.—B. C. 1648 to 1608.

THE first march of the Israelites, which was necessarily both an abrupt and a disorderly one, carried them no further than to Succoth, a town distant about twelve miles from Rameses, and on the outskirts of Goshen. Here two of their sacred ordinances, the feast of unleavened bread, and the dedication of the firstborn of man and beast to the Lord, were instituted. At the same time, the people were mustered, when the total number of men, independently of women, children, and followers, was found to amount to 600,000; after which they again set forward, the angel of God going before them in a pillar of cloud by day, and in a pillar of fire by night. Instead, however, of taking the direct route, which would have led them through the country of the warlike Philistines, they bent their steps towards the extreme part of the Arabian gulf, where, at a place called Etham, on the borders of the wilderness of Shur, they again halted.

Thus were they circumstanced, when Pharaoh, recovering from the panic with which late occurrences had affected him, and repenting of the facility with

which he had yielded to the entreaties of his subjects, determined to follow the fugitives, and bring them back, at all hazards, to their old settlements. With this view, he ordered a numerous and select body of troops, chiefly cavalry and war-chariots, under arms, and putting himself at their head, began a fierce and rapid pursuit after the Israelites. Nor was he unsuccessful in his efforts to overtake them. Having moved from Etham, they had, by God's especial direction, travelled down the channel of the bay as far as Pi-hahiroth, where in a valley, hemmed in on two sides by mountains, and blocked up on the third by the sea, they once more pitched their tents. Here Pharaoh came up with them, and seizing the only outlet, that by which they had penetrated, he calculated, not without great show of reason, that his rebellious slaves lay absolutely at his mercy.

Great was the alarm throughout the Hebrew camp, when Pharaoh's armed bands made their appearance. Unaccustomed to war, and broken in spirit by long years of slavery and oppression, the Israelites dreamed not of the possibility of standing on their own defence, but upbraided Moses, as if he had brought them out from the land of Egypt, only that they might perish by the sword in the wilderness. Moses, however, so far from resenting their injustice, only entreated them "to stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he should show them that day;" and he had scarcely said so, when the pillar removed from the head of the Israelite's camp to the rear, thus interposing an impassable barrier between them and their enemies. At the same time, the prophet stretched out his rod towards the sea, which was immediately divided into two parts, whilst a strong east wind blowing, dried up the channel, after which the people were again put in motion, and advanced towards the edge of the gulf. It was night, and among the Egyptian columns, a night

of profound darkness; but the Israelites, guided by the refulgence from the pillar in their rear, saw plainly the way which had been miraculously opened for them. They entered upon it without apprehension, the waters standing like a wall on their right hand, and on their left; and they continued their journey along the bottom of the deep, free from every accident or hinderance. It was not so with the pursuers. They likewise plunged into the tract, not doubting that where footmen could travel with security, horses and chariots might be trusted; but no great while elapsed ere they learned to repent their rashness. "It came to pass," says the inspired historian, "that in the morning watch, the Lord looked into the host of the Egyptians, through the pillar of fire, and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians." The chariots drove heavily, broke down, or upset, the horses floundered in pools, or sank in quicksands, till the whole were thrown into irremediable confusion, and a horrible dread fell upon them. They would have fled from the presence of the men, whose destruction they had vowed, but it was now too late. No sooner were the Israelites safely landed on the opposite shore, than Moses again stretched forth his rod over the sea, and the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh, so that there remained not so much as one of them."

The joy of the Israelites at this unlooked-for deliverance, was great in proportion to the fears which had previously oppressed them. They professed no longer to doubt that Moses acted by the direction of the Most High; promised to pay to all his orders implicit obedience, and joined heartily in singing the sublime hymn which he composed in celebration of the destruction of their enemies. But they had not proceeded far into the wilderness, ere excessive thirst began to assail them, and all their protestations of trust in God, and

in their leader, were forgotten. They had arrived, towards the close of the third day, at a fountain; but its waters were so bitter, that the people found it impossible to make use of them, and they loudly murmured against Moses, saying, "where shall we drink." God, however, directed Moses how to remove this evil also. By casting a piece of common wood into the fountain, its waters were rendered sweet; and the people, after being severely rebuked for their want of faith, were permitted to slake their thirst.

The next halting-place of the Israelites was at Elim, a spot shaded with palm-trees, and abounding in water; but on proceeding into the wilderness of Sin, their provisions began to fail, and they again complained loudly of Moses and of God. Once more God forgave their rebellion, and supplied their wants. He caused flocks of quails to come up every evening, and showers of manna to fall every night; of which the people were directed to gather no more each morning than should suffice for the consumption of the day, with this memorable exception, that on the day preceding the Sabbath, an adequate supply should be laid in for the consumption of two days. Some of the people, however, chose to disregard the advice of Moses, by neglecting to provide, as they had been directed, food for the Sabbath. These went out, expecting to find the manna as usual on the ground, but they were mistaken, none had fallen, and none ever fell on the night preceding the Sabbath.

From the wilderness of Sin, the Israelites were led by the cloudy pillar, which still directed their movements, to a place called Rephidim, where a severe scarcity of water was again experienced, producing its customary effect, a violent and shameful mutiny. Here Moses, by God's direction, smote a rock in the camp with his rod, which immediately poured forth a clear and limpid stream. But one difficulty was scarcely

surmounted, ere another, and to a people timid and irresolute like the Hebrews, a scarcely less formidable danger met them. The King of the Amalekites, at the head of a powerful and well-appointed army, advanced against them, and a severe battle, the first which the Israelites had fought, took place. In this, however, God gave them the victory; Moses continuing in prayer on the top of an eminence, whilst the struggle went on; and an altar was raised in commemoration of the event, called Jehovah-nissi, or, "the Lord, my banner."

The defeat of the Amalekites opened a way to the wandering tribes, as far as Mount Sinai, or Horeb, the spot upon which God had originally commissioned Moses with an assurance that the people should worship him there. Here the tents were again pitched, and a variety of interesting events occurred. In the first place, Moses received a visit from his father-in-law, Jethro, at whose suggestion he appointed a number of inferior magistrates, for the purpose of hearing and determining all minor causes, between man and man, subject only to an appeal to himself. In the next place, it pleased God to enter here into a solemn covenant with his people, and to bestow upon them those laws, by which, during the whole of their future career, they continued to be guided. This was done under circumstances of no common solemnity. On a certain day, the Israelites, who had been forewarned of what was about to happen, beheld the mountain enveloped in clouds of smoke, from which vivid flashes of lightning, from time to time, burst forth, whilst awful thunderings shook the rocks to their foundations, and filled the hearts of all, who heard them, with dismay. In the midst of this tumult, the whole congregation was removed to a certain line, drawn regularly round the base of the hill, where men, women, and children prostrated themselves upon the earth, in

fearful expectation of what was to follow. In a few moments a trumpet began to sound, increasing in its blasts, till it rang throughout the desert; the thunders grew more and more loud, the lightnings more and more terrible, till suddenly all was hushed, and the voice of God was heard, clear and distinct, issuing from the midst of the smoke.

It delivered slowly and audibly those ten commandments, which may be said to comprise a summary of the Jewish moral code; as they undeniably embrace the substance of all that natural religion teaches of man's duty towards his Maker and his neighbour.

The effect of this scene upon the people at large was to impress them, at least for the moment, with the most profound reverence for God, and respect for Moses: indeed such was their terror, that they shrank gradually back from the burning mountain, and entreated their leader henceforth to communicate between them and Jehovah. With this arrangement the Lord was well pleased; he accordingly called Moses up into the mountain, Joshua and others waiting at its base, where the prophet remained invisible to human eyes during a space of forty days and forty nights. In that time God gave him various additional ordinances, some of them remarkable for their humanity, others conspicuous for their justice, and all admirably adapted to the state of society for which they were intended; whilst the form and construction of the tabernacle, of the sanctuary, of the table of show-bread, the altars, basins, censers, lavers, candlesticks, and other implements to be used in divine worship, were minutely and accurately described. In like manner the family of Aaron was formally set apart for the priesthood; and the priests' vestments, including the mysterious Urim and Thummim, explained. Finally, a variety of sacrifices were appointed, with offerings and oblations from the people, as atonements for sin, and means of

reconciliation with the Creator ; and the observance of the Sabbath being again strictly enjoined, God, when he had given to Moses two tables of stone, on which the decalogue was written, ceased, for a brief season, to commune with him.

In the mean while, matters had assumed an aspect within the camp of Israel which shows how degraded, in point both of morals and civilization, must have been the condition of that people. Alarmed at the continued absence of Moses, and apprehensive that he would no more return to them—fearful, too, that the divine symbol, which at this particular juncture was withdrawn, might not be restored, they came in a body to Aaron, with a demand, that “he would make them gods, which should go before them.” It is not very easy to conceive how persons, who had listened but a few days previously to a solemn denunciation, which forbade them to assimilate Jehovah to any creature, could fall into a crime so glaring as this ; for that they desired to have an image of the Lord of heaven and earth, seems to be generally admitted ; and still harder is it to devise a motive, why Aaron should have yielded to their wishes. Such, however, are the facts, as they stand upon the authority of Moses. Whether Aaron remonstrated with them, or not, we are not informed ; probably he did ; but if so, his remonstrances appear to have been neither very peremptory, nor very influential, since they ended in his desiring the women to contribute a portion of their golden ornaments, out of which an idol might be made. The demand was complied with, the gold was furnished, and Aaron having moulded it into shape, produced a representative of the Egyptian god Apis, in the form of a golden calf. Before that lump of inanimate metal the Israelites forthwith assembled in large numbers ; they offered sacrifices to it, called upon it to direct them, danced round it, as they had seen their former masters do at the feast of Apis, and

caused the encampment to ring, from one end to the other, with the voice of joy and revelry.

Such was the state of affairs in the camp, when God, informing Moses of what had happened, expressed his determination of exterminating at once a people, who could so speedily forget their obligations to him, as well as their own solemn engagements. Though the threat was accompanied by a gracious promise, that of Moses himself a nation should be made, greater and more powerful than these ungrateful rebels, the pious lawgiver hesitated not to intercede with the Almighty in favour of his countrymen. His suit was not rejected; upon which Moses, taking the two tables in his hand, and followed by Joshua and his companions, ran with all haste towards the assembly. Here his indignation overcame him so much, that, dashing the tables upon the ground, he broke them to pieces, whilst he seized the golden calf, reduced it to powder, and, casting it into a quantity of water, compelled the idolaters to drink up the god whom they had worshipped. Nor did the punishment of the rebels end here. A body of armed Levites passed, by Moses's order, through the defenceless and degraded crowd, putting to death, without distinction, all whom they met; so that three thousand persons paid the immediate penalty of their lives for this act of glaring and most atrocious apostacy. For their zeal on that occasion, the Levites were rewarded by an admission to the honours and emoluments of the priesthood, though in subordination to the priesthood of Aaron and his lineal descendants in all ages; whilst the people at large were visited by a disease, of which many, in the course of their future wanderings, died.

Having thus chastised the people, Moses, after threatening them with further evils, in the event of a repetition of their crime, caused a tent to be pitched apart, in testimony that God would not, as heretofore,

dwell sensibly among idolaters. This was scarcely done, when the cloudy pillar overshadowed it, and Moses entering in, was blessed with a vision of God's glory, more direct than any which had yet been vouchsafed to him. It was pronounced to him, likewise, that God would forgive the Israelites, and take them again into immediate covenant with himself; and Moses was, in consequence, commanded to come up a second time into the mount, in order to receive again the terms of the Divine dispensation. The inspired historian obeyed the injunction. Again was he forty days and forty nights on Sinai, holding close and mysterious intercourse with Jehovah; and again were the Ten Commandments, written with the finger of God, on two tables of stone, committed to his charge. With these, as well as with fresh instructions, touching the observance of the Sabbath, and an abstinence from idolatry, God sent him down to the congregation; and such was the halo shed around him, that for some time after his return, no man could look upon his countenance unveiled.

The first proceeding of Moses, after he resumed his station in the camp, was to order the construction of the Tabernacle, with all its costly furniture and gorgeous ornaments. These were completed in the space of six months; and the tabernacle itself being erected on the first day of the first month, in the second year of the Exode, it was immediately overshadowed by the cloudy pillar by day, and by the pillar of fire by night. This done, and all things duly arranged, Moses entered in to receive explicit instructions respecting a variety of points which had not yet been brought forward. It was then that God imposed upon the Israelites that minute and complicated system, under which, for the wisest purposes, he commanded them to live. They were told how he desired to be worshipped—by sacrifice, by oblation, by offering;—the particular

animals to be used on every occasion were specified; the mode of slaughtering, or otherwise disposing of them, was pointed out; and the purposes, which each was designed to serve, were explained. Some things were prohibited, others enjoined—in themselves unimportant, but productive of the most important results. Laws of cleanness and uncleanness, laws regulating marriages, nay, laws restricting the Israelites in certain articles of food, were enacted. In a word, “the load of ordinances,” as St. Paul terms it, was then placed upon the necks of Israel, from which they were doomed never to be morally free, till Shiloh should come.

These things being arranged, and Aaron and his sons solemnly consecrated to the priesthood, the first sin-offering for the high-priest and the people was placed in order upon the altar, of which God was pleased to mark his gracious acceptance by sending down fire from heaven to consume it. The fire, thus miraculously kindled, was by divine command dedicated to holy uses. An order was issued that it should never be permitted to go out, and that all oblations should be offered through it alone; and that God’s orders, even in ceremonial matters, were not to be violated with impunity, a remarkable proof was soon given. Nadab and Abihu, two of Aaron’s sons, presumed, notwithstanding these instructions, to place common fire in the censers of incense within the tabernacle, upon which “there went out a fire from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord.” In like manner two memorable instances occurred of the terrible punishments which awaited blasphemy and a breach of the Sabbath, under the new constitution granted to the Israelites. A certain man, descended from an Egyptian father and an Hebrew mother, being convicted of the former crime, was, by the express command of God, stoned to death; whilst

another person, who chose, in defiance of the law, to gather sticks on the Sabbath-day, underwent a similar fate.

As soon as these more important matters were adjusted Moses proceeded, by God's direction, to number the people, and to regulate the disposition of their encampments and the order of their marches. The result of the muster showed that Israel could bring into the field no fewer than 603,550 fighting men, exclusively of the tribe of Levi, whose business it was to attend upon the tabernacle; and the following is the mode in which these were required to place themselves, as well during a halt as on a journey: The whole army being told off in four grand divisions, was required to place itself, when at rest, in a sort of square, enclosing on every side, and so protecting from hazard of insult and capture, the tabernacle and ark of God. On the eastern side was erected the standard of the camp of Judah, in which were marshalled the tribes of Judah, Issachar, and Zebulon; on the south, the standard of Reuben, which included the tribes of Reuben, Simeon, and Gad; on the west stood the tents of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin; on the north, those of Dan, Naphtali, and Asher. Within this larger square, again, there was a lesser, composed entirely of the tribe of Levi, Moses, and Aaron, with Aaron's sons, covering the east flank of the tabernacle, the Kohathites the south, the Gershonites the west, and the Merarites the north. Such was the arrangement of the Israelites during a halt, and their order of march was in strict unison with it. As soon as the pillar of cloud withdrew from the tabernacle, the trumpet sounded, upon which the standard of Judah was raised, and the three tribes that marched under it set forward. These were no sooner in motion, than the tabernacle was struck, and placed, with its boards and staves, in waggons adapted to receive it, which followed the rear of the

leading column, under an escort composed of Gershonites and Merarites. A second alarum was now sounded, upon which the standard of Reuben, with its three tribes, set forward, followed, as those of Judah had been, by the sanctuary; only this latter, as being at once more sacred and less cumbersome than the tabernacle, was not conveyed in cars, but borne upon the shoulders of the Kohathites. Close upon the rear of the sanctuary marched the division of Ephraim, whilst the three tribes, under the standard of Dan, moved last of all, and formed a sort of rearguard.

To regulate these various matters aright, and to initiate the people into the routine of the system, under which they were henceforth to live, occupied no inconsiderable portion of time, during which they inhabited a sort of standing camp, not far from Mount Horeb; but at last the pillar of cloud was withdrawn from above the sanctuary, and the appointed signals being made, the march began. It would require a much more extended space than our limits will permit us to occupy, were we to follow their journeys, and narrate the adventures which befell them from that day forth, in the order in which they are recorded in the Bible. We must, therefore, content ourselves with stating generally, that at a place called Taberah the people again rebelled, under the pretext that they were physically unable to advance further, and that they were punished for their crime by the destruction of the stragglers by fire, which fell upon them from heaven; that Moses, distrustful of his own ability to guide so perverse a people, chose here seventy principal men as his assistants in the government, on whom God bestowed a portion of that spirit which he had already given to Moses; and that for a time these new regulations, with a remembrance of judgments passed, served to keep the congregation in something like subjection: but the latter no sooner began to wax faint, than the

old spirit of mutiny once more showed itself, and weary of their manna, they murmured loudly because they had been removed from the fleshpots of Egypt. In consequence of this, God renewed his miraculous gift of quails, which seems, for a season, to have been withdrawn, though he thought fit to strike dead the most impious of the murmurers, when in the very act of gratifying their unmanageable appetites.

All these things were abundantly vexatious to Moses; but an event took place at Hazeroth more galling to his feelings as an individual, than any which had previously occurred. The event to which we allude was the rebellion, against his authority, of persons no less conspicuous than his sister Miriam and his brother Aaron, who because their courage was not equal to an open attack upon himself, complained loudly of his insulting the people by retaining his Ethiopian wife. It is worthy of notice, that Moses, finding Zipporah's brother extremely useful, in consequence of his perfect acquaintance with the localities of the desert, had prevailed upon him to remain about his person; and it has been surmised, not without probability, that it was of the influence of that individual, rather than of Zipporah, that Aaron and Miriam were jealous. Be this, however, as it may, the rebels were soon punished for their offence, God smiting Miriam, who seems to have been the ringleader, with a leprosy, of which she was not cured until she had undergone the ordinary lustration of a seven days' exclusion from the camp.

By this time the Israelites were arrived at Kadesh, in the wilderness of Paran and on the frontiers of Canaan, from whence it was determined to send out spies for the purpose of reconnoitring the face of the country, and gathering information touching its defences. For this purpose twelve men were chosen, one from each tribe, among whom, Joshua, the son of Nun, and Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, were numbered,

who, after an absence of forty days, returned with a particular account, both of the appearance of the country and of its inhabitants. With respect to the former, they asserted that it was indeed a rich and beautiful region, in proof of which they conveyed into the camp bunches of grapes of extraordinary size and luxuriance; but the latter, they represented to be at once, too powerful and too well prepared to authorize any attempt on the part of the Hebrews to subdue them. It was in vain that Joshua and Caleb delivered an opinion diametrically the reverse, assuring Moses and Aaron, and the people, that there was nothing in Canaan capable of opposing their force. The other ten, being cowards, infected the congregation with their own unworthy spirit, and the army of God refused to advance.

A severe but just punishment awaited them for this glaring instance of distrust in the power which had already delivered them from so many dangers and hardships. They had gone so far as to propose the election of a new leader, who should carry them back again into Egypt, and had threatened to stone Joshua and Caleb for presuming to oppose their designs, when the glory of God suddenly appeared with more than common lustre above the tabernacle, and a voice issued from it, big with portents of wrath and fiery indignation. It was announced to Moses that God would destroy the entire congregation in a moment, nor when the latter made humble, but earnest intercession for their pardon, was his suit without difficulty granted. Nevertheless, God solemnly declared, that in punishment of their repeated apostacies, and above all of this last and worst display of perverseness, not an individual, of all who had attained to the age of twenty years, should see the promised land, with the solitary exceptions of Joshua and Caleb, both of whom had proved faithful to their duty. This was a fearful pre-

diction, and it produced the effect which might have been expected from it, among a people so volatile and unsteady. Their distrust vanishing, they became urgent to be led on, notwithstanding Moses's repeated assurances that God would no longer go with them; and a party, venturing in this spirit to attack the Amalekites and Canaanites in the mountains, were defeated and driven back with considerable slaughter.

Nothing remained for the Israelites, after this repulse, except to follow the guidance of Moses, whithersoever he might lead, and they were accordingly conducted back into the wilderness, where during many years they became wanderers. In the course of these peregrinations a variety of remarkable occurrences befell, with seditions and rebellions innumerable, of the chief of which alone it will be necessary to lay before the reader any connected or circumstantial account.

The influence which Moses and Aaron enjoyed, the one as civil ruler, the other as high-priest of the congregation, seems to have given great umbrage, from time to time, to certain ambitious and aspiring individuals of the nation. So many proofs had, however, been exhibited, that Moses acted entirely under the direction of a higher power, that the disposition to question his authority seems, by this time, to have ceased; but of the pre-eminence of Aaron great jealousy was entertained, particularly by persons belonging to his own tribe; this, which had long smouldered, burst forth at last in the following manner, and the sedition, after raging violently for a time, led to the following memorable results:

There was a certain man, named Korah, the great-grandson of Levi, by Izhar, and consequently one of the heads of that tribe to which Moses and Aaron belonged. This man, who considered that his right to the high-priesthood, was at least equal to that of Aaron, had long caballed against the brothers, till having

drawn into his interests several leading persons, especially Dathan, Abiram, and On, chiefs of the tribe of Reuben, he resolved to bring matters to an issue at once. With this view, he accused Moses and Aaron of assuming a superiority over their brethren, to which they were not entitled, and openly asserted his own claim to that office which Aaron had unjustly usurped.

Moses was deeply grieved at such conduct, but willing to set the question at rest for ever, he proposed that Aaron and Korah, attended by their adherents, should each approach the tabernacle with censers, and that the individual whose offering God openly accepted, should be confirmed in the high-priesthood. To this Korah readily assented, and on the following morning, the candidates, according to agreement, appeared each with his censer, at the door of the tabernacle. But Korah was not content to come with his attendant priests only, he arrived at the head of a numerous and determined band, as if it had been his design, in case other means failed, of bearing down all opposition by violence. At this moment the glory of God fell upon the tabernacle with extraordinary lustre, and there came a voice, which called upon Moses and Aaron to separate themselves from a polluted and devoted nation. But the brothers, regardless of the wrongs which they had themselves suffered, earnestly besought God once more to spare their countrymen, into the midst of whom they ran, imploring them to withdraw from the society of the rebels, because God would this day mark his sense of the crime which had just been committed, by the infliction of a punishment unparalleled in history. Scarcely had these words been uttered, when there came out a volume of fire from the tabernacle which consumed Korah and his immediate attendants on the spot, whilst the earth suddenly opening beneath the tents of their kindred and followers, they all perished from the face of the earth.

Great as this display of power was, and abundantly conclusive as to the rights of the several claimants, such was the perverseness of the Israelites, that they no sooner recovered from the effect of immediate terror than they again murmured against Moses and Aaron. The very judgments of which they had been eyewitnesses, furnished them on this occasion with ground of complaint, and they scrupled not to accuse their ruler and high-priest of murdering the people of the Lord. Their crime was met by an immediate and terrible punishment ; a plague broke out among them, which, before it was stayed by the intercession of Moses and Aaron, swept off upwards of fourteen thousand persons. And now a new scheme was devised by Moses, for the purpose of settling for ever that question which had already produced so many disasters. He gave directions that Aaron, on the one hand, and the heads of every tribe on the other, should bring each his rod, inscribed with their respective names to the tabernacle, where they should be openly deposited till the following morning, in order that God might mark by them on whom his choice had fallen. It was understood that the individual whose rod should be found to have blossomed during the night, was to be esteemed as the person whom God had elected to be his high-priest. All things were done as Moses commanded. The rods were inscribed, brought to the tabernacle, and deposited there ; and on the following morning Aaron's was found covered with blossoms, leaves, and ripe fruit. There was no possibility of refusing obedience to a sign so palpable ; and God commanded that in witness of his decision, as well as for the purpose of affording a lasting testimony to the right of Aaron's family to the priesthood, Aaron's rod should be preserved ever after in the ark of the covenant.

The high-priesthood being thus established in the

family of Aaron, with a threat that any other individuals approaching the sanctuary, or touching the vessels belonging to it, should die, God proceeded to institute other rites and ceremonies of peculiar import and fitness. This done, the congregation once more struck their tents, and moving through the wilderness of Zin, arrived at a place, called Kadesh, where Miriam, the sister of Moses, died; and a fresh sedition arose, because of a scarcity of water. To supply the want of which the people complained, Moses was directed *to speak* to a rock, and assured that at his *word*, it would pour forth a stream, but the patience and perhaps the faith even of Moses failed; for he *smote* the rock with his rod, as is recorded, with scorn and in undisguised anger. Hence a tradition among the rabbins, that Moses's heart sank within him, when he remembered his former miracle, and the length of time which had elapsed since it was performed, and that he gave up all hope of ever conducting the people into the promised land, upon an apprehension that a similar delay would follow his present deed of power. Though not always disposed to rest implicit confidence in Jewish legends, we are compelled to allow that the present has about it a great appearance of truth, inasmuch as the sacred historian represents the Almighty as charging both Aaron and himself with want of faith on the present occasion. Be this, however, as it may, Moses was informed that neither he nor Aaron should be permitted to plant foot upon the soil of Canaan; whilst the fountain was named Meribah, "because the children of Israel strove with the Lord, and he was sanctified in them." From this point Moses despatched messengers to the King of Edom, requesting a free passage through his country, and promising that no violence would be offered, either to him or to his subjects; but the Edomite peremptorily refused to sanction the measure, and appeared at the head of a

formidable army to oppose it. As it fell not in with God's designs, that at this time the passage should be forced, the Israelites, on receiving intelligence of Edom's movements, decamped, and proceeded as far as Mount Hor, on the borders of his territory. Here Aaron died, after resigning his vestments, with the priestly office to Eleazar, and was buried at the great age of one hundred and twenty-three years.

The next journey was to Zalmonah; where, in consequence of some fresh repinings, they were visited with a plague of venomous serpents; but, on their repentance and humiliation, Moses was directed to rear the image of a serpent in brass, by looking to which, such as had been bitten were cured. From thence they marched to Jahuz, with the design of passing through the country of Moab, Moses acting here as he had done with the Edomites. But Sihon, King of the Amorites, instead of complying with their request, marched out to oppose them; and attacking them furiously in their camp, a great battle ensued. It ended in the total defeat of the Amorites, whose territories were seized by the victorious Hebrews; as were those likewise of Og, King of Bashan, one of Sihon's allies, who endeavoured to arrest their further progress.

Encouraged by these successes, the Israelites marched to the plains of Moab, and encamped on the banks of the Jordan, opposite to Jericho. Their arrival here threw Balak, King of Moab, into the utmost consternation; and anticipating no other fate, besides that which had already befallen the Amorites, in the event of his openly taking the field against them, he determined, according to the superstitious temper of the times, to overwhelm them with the power of magic. With this view, he despatched messengers to Balaam, a celebrated magician of Pellior, in Mesopotamia, entreating him to come up, and curse the Israelites; and promised, in case his summons were promptly attended

to, to load the necromancer with riches and honours. Balaam was not a man to refuse an invitation thus conveyed. After some delays, arising from certain visions with which God visited the slumbers of the wizard, Balaam sent back the ambassadors with an assurance that he would lose no time in repairing to Balak's presence, and that he would do his best to gratify the king's desires, as far as it should be permitted him by a higher power. In accordance with this promise, Balaam set out on the following day, and had proceeded a short space on his journey, when his ass, on which he rode, suddenly became restive, and refused to go forward. He beat the animal repeatedly to no purpose, till at last, God miraculously endowing it with the faculty of speech, it remonstrated against his cruelty. At the same moment Balaam's eyes were opened, and he beheld an angel standing before him with a drawn sword in his hand, and in an attitude of hostility, upon which he fell to the ground on his face, in extreme terror, and entreated pardon for the crime of which he had meditated the commission. The angel, however, would not permit him to turn back, though he assured him that his journey was altogether displeasing to God; so he proceeded forward, and was met at the boundary of Moab by Balak and his nobles.

A few preliminaries having been gone through, Balaam was conducted by the king to the summit of certain high places, sacred to the impure god Baal, from whence the whole extent of the Hebrew encampment was visible. Here the necromancer commanded his followers to erect seven altars, and to offer upon each a bullock and a ram, and desired Balak to remain beside the victims, whilst he withdrew to a place apart to consult the divinity; but the power of Jehovah was upon him. He returned, and in a strain sufficiently indicative that he spoke and acted under an impulse irresistible, poured forth a torrent of bene-

dictions upon the nation whom he had been bribed to curse. The same event occurred three different times in spite of the most strenuous efforts on the part of the magician to prevent it; till Balak at last became furious with disappointment, and threatened to dismiss Balaam with ignominy to his home. It was now that Balaam, still acting under a divine afflatus, gave utterance to one of the most sublime prophecies recorded in Holy Writ; in which it was foretold that "a Star should come forth from Jacob, and a Rod from Israel; that it should smite the chiefs of Moab, and destroy the children of Sheth; that Edom should fall under its power; the Amalekites and Kenites be extirpated; and finally, that the western nations, the Greeks and Romans, should overthrow the Assyrians and Hebrews, only that they themselves might be overthrown in their turn."

That these blessings and prophetic annunciations came involuntarily from the lips of Balaam, is proved by the fact that he had no sooner spoken them, than he advised the adoption of such measures as promised most effectually to hinder their fulfilment. At his suggestion the Moabites hastened to open a friendly communication with the Israelites; and their women being beautiful, as well as singularly depraved, they very soon succeeded in corrupting a people, at all times the slaves of impure and violent desires. The worship of Baal-peor by ceremonies too brutal to be named, sufficed to draw the Israelities away from their allegiance to God; and their apostacy was promptly rewarded by the breaking out of a terrible and deadly plague among them. Nor was this all; by God's express command, every head of a house convicted before tribunals appointed to try the question, of having given his sanction to these shameful proceedings, was publicly hanged, till the number executed fell not short of a thousand. It was on this occasion that Phi-

nehas, the son of Eleazar, exhibited so much zeal in God's cause, as to receive the peculiar approbation of Jehovah by the establishment in him and his posterity for ever of the Aaronitish priesthood.

A terrible vengeance hung over the Moabites and Midianites for the insidious manner in which they had sought the ruin of Israel. Moses no sooner reduced his people to order, than he sent against them a chosen army, which overthrew them in a pitched battle, slew five of their kings, including Balaam, the sorcerer, took their women and children captives, and burnt their towns with fire. Large quantities of plunder thus fell into the hands of the troops, who offered a considerable portion of it, as an expiatory oblation to God, and the Almighty was pleased to accept it, in token that he was reconciled to his wayward people.

By this time the Israelites were in possession of all the country, south of the river Jordan, including the territories of the two nations which they had just subdued, and the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh, expressing a wish to obtain permanent settlements there, Moses, on condition that they would cross with their brethren, and assist in the subjugation of Canaan, readily assented. At the same time, he pointed out the limits which were to bound the conquests of the tribes, assigning to each its portion of territory by lot, and as the Levites were denied any separate or distinct district, he awarded them eight-and-forty cities in different parts of the country. Besides this, he made other arrangements, such as the setting apart of six cities of refuge, where the casual homicide might find shelter; and whilst he ordered that every wilful murderer should suffer death, he enacted that no man should undergo that last penalty on the testimony of fewer than two witnesses. Finally, he laid his hand upon the head of Joshua, thus

consecrating him to be the future leader of the congregation, and having recapitulated all the leading points in their history, assured them of God's blessing and protection in case of obedience, of his wrath and severe judgments in case of disobedience, deposited the book of the law in the ark of the covenant, and given particular directions as to its preservation, Moses made ready for that great change, of which the moment was now at hand. By direction of the Almighty he ascended to the summit of Mount Pisgah, from whence he obtained a bird's-eye view over the future home of his people, and then, at the age of one hundred and twenty years, with eyes undimmed, and vigour of body unimpaired, he gave up the ghost. Of his place of sepulture, no trace can be discovered. His body never having been found, it is stated by the writer who records the manner of his death, that God buried it "in a valley, in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor," and we are justified in concluding that the measure was one of wise precaution, to prevent the Israelites, ever prone to idolatry, from offering, at the grave of their great prophet, unholy worship.

Such is a general outline of those extraordinary occurrences, which attended the departure of the Israelites out of Egypt, and marked the whole period of their forty years' sojourn in the wilderness, and it now only remains to notice the chief of the objections which have, from time to time, been brought against the veracity of their inspired narrator. These, as we need scarcely remind the reader, affect the entire series of events from first to last. They refer, not only to the many miracles, both of preservation and punishment, of which the Israelites are represented as having been the subjects, but to the wisdom and goodness of the Deity, as these are depicted, as well in his general as in his particular dealings with

his people. It is not our intention to waste much time in vindicating the truth of details, upon which, in point of fact, the credibility of the Bible itself depends. The miracles recorded in the Books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, are doubtless very wonderful, but they are told in a volume full of wonders, and they must either be admitted on the authority of the volume, or the volume itself, with all its important truths, rejected as spurious. That the latter cannot be done without the violation of every principle of sound reason, we have already taken an opportunity to prove, and the only alternative which remains, is to adopt the former course without hesitation; we had almost said without inquiry. A few words, however, on one or two of the most remarkable of these displays of the Divine power, may not perhaps be amiss, were it only to allay such scruples as are apt to attach to the minds even of the most pious.

It has been suggested by infidel writers, that the pillar of cloud which Moses describes as going before the camp by day, and the pillar of fire by night, is referrible to a custom very early in use, and to a certain extent still practised by travellers through the desert. Before the compass was invented, caravans were in the habit of having their route marked by guides who preceded them, and carried, as a sort of moveable beacon, a quantity of fire elevated upon lofty poles. Such a beacon, seen from the rear of an immense column, marching through a sandy plain, would, by day, present the appearance of a cloudy pillar, as by night, it would assume the aspect of a pillar of flame.

In reply to this, we have only to remark, that the cloudy pillar was either what Moses represents it to have been, or there was no cloudy pillar at all. Could any art or argument persuade 600,000 persons

that one man, or a hundred men, marching before them and bearing fire, elevated upon poles, performed all that Moses tells his contemporaries was performed by the pillar of cloud in their presence, and under their immediate observation? The cloudy pillar appeared sometimes within the camp, sometimes in rear, sometimes in front; were these 600,000 persons to be persuaded that a single man, carrying an ordinary fire, or a few men carrying a few fires, and resting occasionally in the midst of them, constituted a being so awful as that pillar is stated to have been? The Israelites, as their history vouches, were peculiarly prone to idolatry, and they are said to have been under the guidance of the pillar during forty years. Is it conceivable, that such a people could, for so long a space of time, be cajoled into the belief that a cloudy pillar was moving, sometimes before, sometimes behind them, that it sometimes rested in their camp, sometimes at a short distance from it; that they heard Moses receive, from time to time, instructions from the Being who inhabited it, and that they saw lightnings flash from it, to destroy daring sinners; is it conceivable that the Israelites could be persuaded of all this, when in reality, there was nothing of the kind to be seen or heard? The man who asserts this, need not accuse the most enthusiastic sectary of credulity.

Again, it has been suggested, that the tremendous scene at the delivery of the law, may very satisfactorily be accounted for, by supposing that Sinai was a volcanic mountain, and that Moses made happy use of an eruption for the purpose of impressing his people with a belief, that he really held close intercourse with Jehovah.

Not to dwell upon the accompaniments of the scene in question, for which no volcanic eruption can account, such as the voice and the clang of trumpets

heard on all sides by many hundreds of thousands of people, we have merely to observe, that wherever a volcano has once been, traces are invariably left behind, such as no lapse of time ever has eradicated, or probably ever will eradicate. Of these, neither Mount Sinai nor Mount Horeb presents a vestige. They are both perfectly smooth on their summits, without crater or orifice of any kind, such as old volcanoes uniformly exhibit, and hence we are compelled to believe, that neither in the days of Moses, nor at any other period, were they subject to volcanic eruptions. The scene at the delivery of the law must, therefore, have been as the Bible represents it, or it never occurred at all.

The very same reasons will apply to every one of those wonderful events which took place during the progress of the Israelites through the wilderness. Rude as we admit that people to have been, it is very difficult to believe that they could be persuaded by their ruler to look upon a fountain, discovered by him among bushes, as miraculously opened, in the face of a hard rock, by a blow from his rod, in their presence; whilst the showers of manna and flights of quails, whether of natural recurrence in the desert or not, were in the case of the Hebrews clearly miraculous. No natural cause can account for the absence of the manna on the Sabbath-day, and on the Sabbath-day only, or for its becoming putrid when kept beyond a certain number of hours on other days, yet remaining perfectly sound throughout the seventh; nor is it probable that the quails would arrive just at a moment when they were most needed, unless directed thither by the hand which regulates nature. Again, the tremendous punishments which from time to time overtook the rebels: the death of Korah and his company by fire issuing from the pillar; of Dathan and his adherents by an earthquake: these things either were

or they were not. If they were not, then must we believe that it is practicable to persuade multitudes of men and women that they actually witnessed events which they had no means of witnessing; and we safely leave it to the reader to decide, whether the alternative be admissible.

But the passage of the Red Sea: has not that event been satisfactorily explained, by supposing that the event took place at Suez, without the intervention of any miracle, merely by the recess of the waters at a spring-tide, aided by the blowing of the Etesian winds? So far is this from being true, that the proof leans directly to a contrary side. The passage was not effected at Suez, but at a point which, according to oriental idiom, lies ten hours journey further down the gulf. This is ascertained from the traditions of the natives, compared with the import of the name of the place, where, previous to the division of the sea, the Israelites encamped. The word "Pi-hahiroth" signifies the "mouth of the ridge," or chain of mountains, which line the western coast of the Red Sea, among which we know that the people were entangled; and as there is but one mouth to that chain through which a retreating multitude could pass, there can be no doubt whatever respecting the situation of Pi-hahiroth. Before that opening, the Israelites, we are told, encamped, between Migdol and the sea, over-against Baal-zephon; but Migdol being probably a tower, which indeed is the meaning of the word, and Baal-zephon, or the northern Baal, a temple on the opposite promontory, both these landmarks, like other works of man, have long ago disappeared. The opening, however, in the ridge of mountains, anciently called Pi-hahiroth, still remains; and the names of conspicuous places in its neighbourhood distinctly prove, that the persons by whom such names were given, believed this to be the point at which the Israelites

passed the gulf in safety, and where Pharaoh and his host were drowned, in attempting to follow. Thus we have, close by Pi-hahiroth, on the western side of the bay, Mount Attaka, or Attake, which signifies *deliverance*; on the eastern side, and nearly opposite, a headland, called Ras Musa, or the *cape of Moses*, and a little further down the gulf, Hamam Taraun, that is, Pharaoh's baths or springs. It is worthy of remark, too, that the general name of the gulf itself is, at these places, Bahr-el-Kolsum, the *bay of submersion*, in which there is a whirlpool, bearing the striking appellation of Birket-Taraun, or the *well* or *pool* of Pharaoh.* The depth of water here never falls short of fourteen fathoms, and the bay is something less than four leagues in width.

But might not Moses lead the people back from this point, where unquestionably no natural means could produce a ford, and having passed them over at Suez, or elsewhere, persuade them that the whole transaction was miraculous? The man who can credit this, must be equally prepared to believe, that he could lead six hundred thousand English peasants from the little watering-place of Southend, round by London-bridge into Kent, yet be able to persuade them, that he had divided the Thames by stretching out his rod over it, and opened a passage for them directly through, from the lower parts of Essex to Sheerness. Besides, we are explicitly informed, that whilst the Israelites were on their march, the waters of the Red Sea stood like walls on either hand of them, and that Moses no sooner stretched forth his rod again, than they returned to their height, and overwhelmed the Egyptians. Is it conceivable that any set of men, however illiterate, could be prevailed upon to believe, that of such phenomena

* See the works of Niebuhr, Bruce, Lord Valentia, and other travellers in these regions.

they had been themselves eyewitnesses, if the case were not so? Our conclusion, therefore, is here, as it has been with respect to the other miracles noticed, either that the events occurred actually as they are described by Moses, or that they did not occur at all. Either the Israelites passed through the sea from Pi-hahiroth to Baal-zephon, the waters standing on their right and on their left, or no such escape out of Egypt, as is described in Exodus, was ever effected.

We come now to those objections to the truth of the Mosaic history which rest upon a totally different foundation, and which it may be thought require greater space, as well as more accurate reasoning, to overthrow. Is it not derogatory to our notions of God's goodness and power, to believe, that He, who designed to lead the Israelites into Canaan, should, from apprehension of the armies of the Philistines, abandon the direct route, and plunge his people into a desert, where a constant succession of miracles was required for their preservation? And are there not in the law which professes to come from him, a variety of matters, contradictory, some of justice, others of mercy, and others of common sense? Why inflict so heavy a penalty as that of death, upon the breach of the Sabbath? why visit, or threaten to visit, the sins of the fathers upon the children? and why impose restrictions upon the Israelites, in arrangements so minute as those affecting their daily food, their ordinary dress, and the cultivation of their fields? What pollution could arise from dressing a calf or kid in its mother's milk; from wearing a robe of mixed linen or woollen, or from sowing a field with different kinds of grain, or ploughing with an ox and an ass yoked together? These, with other and similar questions, have often been put, and to answer them aright, it will be necessary to remind the reader, as well of the nature and con-

stitution of the Hebrew government, as of the purpose, which the nation, thus governed, was intended to serve.

The great design of God, in his dealings with the children of Israel, not in the wilderness only, but from the commencement to the close of their career, was the same, which originally prompted him to call Abraham from among his kindred, namely, to keep alive in a corrupted world, some knowledge of himself, and to prepare mankind by slow, but sure degrees, for the coming of that seed, by whom the serpent's head was to be bruised.

With what rapidity man fell into vice and profaneness, after the expulsion of the first pair from Paradise, has been shown in the preceding pages, together with the fearful judgment, which their repeated and glaring apostacies brought upon them; whilst it has further been observed, that even the memory of the Deluge itself operated in checking the progress of crime only so long as the individuals, who personally witnessed it, survived. After the decease of Noah and his sons, who undoubtedly taught to their immediate descendants, the primitive religion in its original simplicity and purity, a thousand corruptions were, one after another, introduced; till at the period of Abraham's election, the whole of the inhabited globe appears, with a few exceptions, to have been hastening on towards a state of universal corruption. It was this circumstance indeed, as we have already said, which urged the Almighty to select the patriarch, as a fit repository of the truth, and to that single end, all God's dealings with the descendants of the patriarch, were uniformly directed.

Of the history of these descendants the preceding pages have given a succinct and connected outline. We have traced them through Isaac and Jacob, and his twelve sons downwards, till they had increased into

a nation, and became to a certain degree intermixed with a race, conspicuous even among idolaters, for excess of idolatry; and we have seen that, as time passed, and the traditions of their ancestors waxed faint, they became themselves deeply tinctured with that hideous vice. But it was not in their morals only that the Israelites suffered, during a portion, at least, of their sojourn in Goshen. Reduced to bondage by the Egyptian kings, and employed night and day in servile offices, every thing like refinement of thought, or elevation of principle, disappeared from among them; and it may truly be asserted, that there could scarcely be found on the face of the earth, a more rude and degenerate race than the Israelites had become at the epoch of their extraordinary deliverance.

Had God conducted a people thus sunk in idolatry and vice, by the direct route from Egypt into Canaan, what probability, nay, what possibility, is there, that one of the great objects, for which they were chosen, ever would have been accomplished. That the Philistines could have successfully opposed them, for whom the God of battles fought, is not for a moment to be imagined, and hence when Moses assigns the apprehension of resistance as his reason for not leading the Israelites by the short way, through the desert, we are to look upon that declaration as made simply in order to meet the querulous complaints of the disaffected. God's design in obliging Moses to avoid that tract, undoubtedly was, to hinder the Hebrews from forming any close intimacy with the pagan tribes, among whom they were destined to dwell, till after they should have been so long under Divine tuition, as to lay the foundation, at least, of true religion; and that design he took the only conceivable method of effecting, which does not contradict his known attributes of justice and consistency. He kept the Israelites in the

desert during forty years, till the most corrupt of the adults paid the debt of nature, and he bestowed upon them, all that while, the very course of culture, which was calculated to remove their propensity to idolatry, without interfering with the perfect freedom of their will.

It has been stated, that at the epoch of their Exode, the Israelites were not only morally depraved, but barbarously ignorant and rude. To convey to men, thus circumstanced, a pure and spiritual religion, such as that which Christ has conferred upon us, was a task clearly not to be attempted, because, unless the Almighty had violently interfered to create, as it were, new capabilities in the minds of the Israelites, it is perfectly evident that they could not have understood it. How then did God act? With wisdom worthy of himself, he assumed not merely a religious, but a political, superiority, over the descendants of Abraham; he constituted himself, in the strictest sense of the phrase, King of Israel, and the government of Israel became, in consequence, strictly and literally a theocracy. Hence it is that not one of the many commands or prohibitions, recorded in the Levitical law, is accompanied by a promise of eternal rewards, or a threat of eternal punishments, but all are sanctioned, as acts of parliament are sanctioned in England, by a reference to immediate consequences. The great design of that law, however, was to preserve entire a belief in the unity and omnipresence of the Deity, as well as to sow the seed, at least, of a code of correct and rigid morals. Let us see how this was to be accomplished.

God having constituted himself King of Israel, passed a law, by which apostacy from the true worship was treated as high-treason, and the person convicted of it was rendered liable to the very same penalties, which attach in modern Europe to that

offence. The traitor to his king, be it remarked, not only suffers death, but his sin is visited upon his descendants by a forfeiture of their titles and estates. Precisely to this, and to no more than this, does the penalty threatened in the second commandment in the decalogue extend, and if there be any injustice in it (which there is not), that injustice is shared with the codes of all the most enlightened nations that have ever flourished on the face of the earth.

Again, it was a matter of the first importance, that the Sabbath-day should be kept holy, among a people strongly inclined, not only to neglect their religious duties, but to corrupt them. Hence the severity of the penalty attached to the breach of a law, which is essential in exact proportion to the comparative rudeness of those to whom it is delivered, because had its observance not been rigidly enforced, a general forgetfulness of the fundamental truths of all religion, must have followed.

Keeping these plain matters of fact in view, no man, we think, can seriously object to the decalogue, that it contains one expression unjust towards man, or unworthy of the wisdom of the Power from which it emanated. The morals of that code are surely as pure and as perfect as can be expressed in human language, whilst its tone is throughout characteristic of that wisdom, which resides only on high. We believe, therefore, that it is not of the law of the two tables that a handle against Divine truth is frequently made, but of the formal or ceremonial code, equally appealing to God, as its founder.

In considering this point, we beg the reader to bear in view, that the decalogue was delivered some time previous to the ceremonial law, and that upon their obedience to it, together with an observance of certain festivals, the rite of circumcision, and a sanctification

of the Sabbath-day, God expressly declares that he originally intended to make his covenant with the Israelites depend. It was not, indeed, till after repeated apostacies on their part, and the palpable display of a disposition to mix with the nations around them, that it was found necessary to subject them to a multifarious ritual, of which the ceremonial parts, solemn and splendid, were well fitted to engage and fix the attention of a gross-hearted people. Then, likewise, was delivered that law of victims, of meats, dress, and ordinary habits, which has so frequently been decried as ridiculous and unworthy of God, but of which a few examples will serve to show, that no method could have been devised, so well adapted to preserve the Israelites, what they were intended to be, a distinct and isolated people.

Whoever takes the trouble to cast his eye over the list of animals devoted by the Levitical law to slaughter, will find that they were precisely such, as the Egyptians, to whose superstition the Israelites long looked back with fondness, particularly revered. Thus, a heifer without blemish, of whatever colour, was in Egypt held sacred to Isis, and worshipped as the visible representative of that goddess; whilst the colour red, or bright yellow, both in man and beast, was consecrated to Typhon, the principle of evil. In contempt of Isis, a heifer without blemish was, by the ritual law of the Hebrews, commanded, as the vilest of all animals, to be burnt without the camp; whoever touched her was pronounced to be unclean; yet of the ashes of this unclean animal, was to be prepared the water of reparation and purification for sin, though the animal herself was required to be of the accursed colour. In like manner the goat was, among the Egyptians, sacred to Pan, and worshipped by the most atrocious rites, as his emblem. Jehovah, on the other hand,

required his people to offer up this Egyptian deity as a sacrifice to himself, and on one occasion to send him away into the wilderness loaded with maledictions. Thus it was throughout the whole law of sacrifice. Every victim offered, was offered in direct opposition to the superstitious notions of the heathen, between whom and the Israelites a wall of partition was thus raised, not to be broken down except by the apostacy of the latter people.

The very same principle which actuated the Almighty (if we may venture thus to express ourselves) in the selection of victims to be offered in sacrifice upon his altars, directed him in the regulation of those more minute occurrences, of which impious and ignorant men have chosen to speak in terms of ridicule. The injunction not to seeth a kid in its mother's milk, for example, will indeed appear a strange one, if it be received without any reference to the religious practices of the idolaters of those times; but when the reader is informed that to feast upon a kid so dressed formed an essential part of the impious and obscene ceremonies which were celebrated in honour of a god, believed to have been suckled by a goat, he will cease to consider the prohibition as useless in itself, or at all unworthy of him who pronounced it. In like manner the Israelites were charged not to wear a garment of linen and woollen mixed, because such a garment was always worn by the heathens during their nocturnal acts of worship, and because they believed that the act of wearing it protected its owner and his property from malign influence, and promoted exceedingly the increase of his wool and flax. Again, fields were not to be sown with different kinds of seed at once, because the heathen were in the habit of thus acting, under the persuasion that each grain could boast of its protecting deity, and that the more mixed their seed, the greater number of

divine guardians they should secure for their crops throughout the season. So was it as to coupling the ox and the ass together in the same harness. That was not only done superstitiously by the Canaanites, but it was, in itself, a cruel arrangement, inasmuch as two animals of very unequal strength became thereby subjected to the same degree of labour; and it was prohibited among the Israelites, as well because cruelty formed no ingredient in their law, as to place them, even in the most minute particulars, in opposition to their neighbours.

But are there not a variety of enactments, the tendency of which is to encourage and foster the worst passions of our nature? The law of divorce is certainly, to say the least of it, exceedingly lax, whilst that which commands an eye to be exacted for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, cannot be defended by any one who considers the forgiveness of injuries to be a moral duty.

There is no question that several of the laws delivered to the Israelites in the wilderness would, if enacted now, be pronounced impolitic, if not unjust; but it by no means follows that they displayed either a want of policy or justice then. Let it be remembered that as the individual man has his stages of childhood, youth, and maturity, during each of which a different system of discipline is required, so has the whole human race, as well as every one of the nations belonging to it, the same course to run, and, to a certain degree, the same variety of training to undergo. The Israelites, at the period of the delivery of their law, were, as their annals prove, in the very first stage of their national existence; they were exceedingly rude, exceedingly barbarous, exceedingly wayward, and exceedingly capricious. To subject such a people to the more perfect moral restraints, which prevail among the polished nations of modern Europe, would have

been impracticable; and as God always adapts his dispensations to the capabilities of those who receive them, he did not attempt it. But let the Jewish laws be compared with the laws of other nations of antiquity, with those of the twelve tables at Rome, with those of Sparta, Athens, or any other state, of whose wisdom we are accustomed to think with an excusable partiality, and what will be the result?—that the Levitical code, in point of strict justice, of mercy, of humanity, and a concurrence with right reason, stands pre-eminently conspicuous, presenting every where glaring and palpable proofs that it could not possibly be the invention of man in a stage of society so barbarous. It is worthy of notice, moreover, that in point of antiquity, the Levitical code far surpasses any with which we are acquainted; yet Solon, and Lycurgus, and Draco, and other legislators, with all the advantages of experience to assist them, failed in producing any thing to be compared with it for wisdom, purity, or fitness.

But how are we to reconcile the repeated apostacies of the Israelites with the fact that God's power, both to defend and to punish was so frequently and conspicuously displayed before them. It seems hardly possible to believe that any tribe, however rude, would commit so flagrant an act of folly, as that recorded against them in the matter of the golden calf, or plunge again and again into idolatry and vice, in spite of the numerous punishments to which, in consequence, they became subject.

There is, no doubt, a good deal here to excite our surprise; but before we pronounce the facts either impossible, or hard to be received, let us look to occurrences, precisely similar in their nature, which are daily and hourly taking place among ourselves. The drunkard is repeatedly warned, not by his medical attendant only, but by personal experience, that if he

persist in the pernicious habit to which he is addicted his health and eventually his life must fall a sacrifice. He sees his affairs thrown into confusion, his family in poverty and distress, and he is himself, from time to time, the victim of violent remorse; yet this man, in the enlightened nineteenth century, possessed of an excellent understanding and a liberal education, runs headlong against every imaginable inducement of conscience and feeling, into ruin. With such a fact staring us in the face, why should we hesitate to believe that a nation of illiterate barbarians, just emerged from the most degrading slavery, and vitiated in their moral not less than in their intellectual being, should, in despite of all the displays of God's power, to which they were witnesses, fall away, as often as a strong temptation occurred, from their allegiance to Jehovah. If it be urged, that such spectacles as those described by Moses, must have acted more powerfully than any restraints of conscience and reason, we answer, that taking into consideration the relative conditions of society, we entertain a directly opposite opinion. We are strongly disposed to believe, that the enlightened and well-educated man who cannot be restrained from the commission of crime by the reproaches of his own heart, and the spectacle of his children's ruin, would not, even now, be cured of his folly, by a repetition of such a scene as occurred on Mount Sinai; and we entertain no doubt at all, that the scene in question produced upon the grovelling barbarians who witnessed it, a far less enduring, if not a less vivid effect, than one night of bitter self-upbraiding produces now upon the drunkard, to whom we have compared them.

One point only remains to be noticed, ere we bring this chapter to a close; we allude to the story of Balaam and his speaking ass, with the consequences attendant upon his visit to Balak's encampment.

Of the miracle of the speaking ass, we have no more to say than that it rests its title to credibility on precisely the same authority with the plagues of Egypt and the passage of the Red Sea. In our extreme self-complacence we are indeed disposed to think that the poor ass was but an unworthy instrument, in the hands of the Most High; whilst the faculty of speech seems so perfectly incompatible with the organic arrangement of the creature's parts, that our scepticism is almost involuntarily excited. But the latter disposition will cease to operate at once, if it be remembered that the ass here, like the pillar of cloud in the camp, was the mere shell, if we may so speak; and that the words, though issuing from the creature's mouth, were the offspring of Almighty volitions. The power which is able to create, may surely be admitted to be competent to the accomplishment of any minor operation; nor is it one whit more surprising that the ass should have conversed with Balaam, than that the serpent conversed with Eve in Paradise. Besides, it is not difficult to discover a motive for the display of this exercise of power under the peculiar circumstances of the case before us. Balaam was on his way for the avowed purpose of cursing those whom God had blessed, and God, by opening the mouth of an animal naturally dumb, and causing it to rebuke its master, taught the sorcerer that whatever his will might be, his power extended no further than Jehovah should sanction.

Of Balaam himself different opinions are held by different commentators; some supposing him to have belonged to the number of true prophets, such as Melchizedek, Job, &c., whom we find apart from the twelve tribes, others contending that he was a mere pretender to supernatural gifts, like the magicians or sorcerers in Egypt. We confess ourselves inclined decidedly to favour the latter opinion. His entire behaviour, in-

deed, as well in his own house as in the high place beside Balak, indicates, that though he was not ignorant of the existence of the God of Israel, nor indisposed to acknowledge his power, he was by no means an exclusive worshipper of him, as the Creator and Governor of the universe. His sacrifices were all offered upon altars sacred to Baal; they were arranged in the order to which Baal's devotees attended; and without a doubt he went apart with the expectation of receiving no divine communication, but merely in continuation of that system of deceit which he was accustomed to practise. His blessings and prophecies were accordingly poured forth under the very same influence which granted speech to the ass; in other words, though sublime and of fixed accomplishment, they were purely involuntary. They relate, as the most competent judges have clearly shown, to the events to which we have referred them; and they have all, as far as time has permitted, been strictly fulfilled.

Note.—It will be seen that no notice has been taken, in the preceding pages, either of the personal history, or of the book received into our Canon, as proceeding from the pen of the patriarch Job. Two motives have directed us in the adoption of this course, either of which will, we presume, operate as a justification in the eyes of our readers. In the first place, the events recorded in that sublime poem, being in no degree connected with the history of the Bible, it would have been totally inconsistent with the plan which we had chalked out for ourselves, to have given of them, even a brief account. In the next place, the opinions which have been held respecting the nature of the book itself, as well as the era of the patriarch's trial, are so varied and so contradictory, that we feel by no means disposed to attempt the arduous task of determining among them. It is enough for us to know

that Job was a real and not a fictitious person ; that he was severely tried and found worthy, and that the book, which bears his name, as it is full of beauty and lessons of piety, has been admitted as canonical in all ages of the church ; but whether it be an exact history, penned by himself, or a dramatic poem composed by somebody else, the learned are by no means agreed. Nor is the question one of any importance whatever.

CHAPTER XII.

Joshua assumes the guidance of the congregation.—Invades Canaan.—His wars and general government.—Objections stated, and answered.

A. M. 3803 to 3829.—B. C. 1608 to 1582.

ON the death of Moses, Joshua, by divine command, assumed the chief direction of the affairs of Israel; and cheered by a promise of the same miraculous assistance which had been afforded to his predecessor, made immediate dispositions to carry his arms into Canaan.

As a preparatory step towards the accomplishment of that great object, spies were sent out from the camp at Shittim, who, crossing the Jordan, bent their steps towards Jericho, a fortified town situated about ten miles from the western bank of the river. They reached the place in safety, and taking up their abode with a female publican, called Rahab, obtained from her much information relative to the temper and preparations of her countrymen. But whilst thus employed, intelligence was conveyed to them that their steps had been traced by the rulers of the city, and that armed men were approaching the house, for the purpose of apprehending them.

Had their hostess proved treacherous under such circumstances, their destruction would have been inevitable, because every avenue of escape was blocked up, and resistance wholly out of the question; but

Rahab, either instigated by a divine impulse, or obeying the dictates of a disposition naturally humane, placed her own life in jeopardy, in order to preserve theirs. She concealed them under some flax, which was laid out to dry on the roof of her house, deceived their pursuers by a story of their pretended departure, and letting them down by a rope from her window after nightfall, placed them in safety beyond the city-wall. In return for so much kindness, the spies readily gave their pledge, that in the event of Jericho falling into the hands of the Israelites, Rahab, with her kindred, should be respected; and it was agreed between them that the same cord which had furnished them with the means of escape, should be hung out as a mark by which to distinguish Rahab's dwelling from others.

In the mean while Joshua had not been backward in removing every obstacle which seemed capable of standing in the way of a speedy commencement of hostilities. Calling together the heads of those tribes which had received their portion on the east of Jordan, he reminded them of their promise to assist their brethren in the subjugation of Canaan, and he was gratified by receiving a prompt assurance that they would by no means violate the engagement. This was scarcely done, when the spies, after lurking for three days among the mountains, came in with the joyful news that their enemies were already more than half defeated by their own terror: orders were accordingly issued that the army should be in readiness to move at a moment's warning, and by dawn, on the following morning, the tents were struck, and the whole congregation was in march.

It was now the season of barley-harvest, which in Palestine and the countries adjacent, occurs early in spring, when the rivers, swollen by the melting of the snow in Libanus, and the falling of frequent showers,

usually overflow their banks. The Jordan, not less than other streams, is subject to periodical floods, and the Israelites, on approaching it, found that it had not only spread its tide over a large portion of the lowlands, but that its current, at all times rapid, was increased into a torrent. As there was no ford here, nor any means at hand for the construction of temporary bridges, the obstacle thus presented to a further progress appeared to the people at large to be insurmountable, and they were the more confirmed in that idea in consequence of the directions which Joshua gave that the camp should be again pitched. But Joshua acted on this, as on other occasions, under the immediate guidance of Jehovah. It pleased God once more to exert his power visibly in favour of his people, and to lay before them one other remarkable proof that their successes arose not from their own valour or conduct, but entirely from his care and protection.

The halt which took place in the vicinity of the Jordan, lasted during three days; at the end of which time, the Israelites having solemnly sanctified themselves, were again put into motion. At the head of the column moved the priests, bearing the ark, whose feet no sooner touched the river, than its stream became divided, and they advanced in security to the very centre of the channel, where they halted. As long as the ark stood here, the waters from above rushed backwards, and rose up into heaps, as far as the town of Adam, whilst below, a space of sixteen or eighteen miles in extent, was left clear between this extraordinary wall, and the Dead Sea. Over that space the army of Israel marched; men, women, and children, sheep, cattle, and baggage, all passed in safety; but the passage was no sooner made good, and the last of the stragglers closed up, than the ark removed from the channel, and the river returned to its strength. The latter events, however, did not take place till after

certain monuments had been erected, both in the river itself, and on the spot where the ark landed. Twelve stones were, by Joshua's directions, taken from the centre of the channel, and planted upon the Canaanitish side in the plain of Gilgal, whilst a like number were piled in the channel itself, so as to be visible, at ordinary floods, from either bank.

The effect of this wonderful occurrence upon the people of the country, was not different from what might have been expected. Their terror, originally great, rose to a height which deprived them of all power of exertion ; insomuch, that instead of advancing to meet Joshua, and endeavouring to overwhelm him by numbers, they shut themselves in their fortified towns, to abide the issue. Of the leisure thus afforded, the Hebrew leader failed not to take advantage. During the progress of the Israelites through the wilderness, two of the most distinguishing ceremonies of their law, the festival of the passover, and the rite of circumcision, had been very imperfectly attended to. The first, indeed, it became impossible to celebrate, from the moment that the people began to depend upon manna for subsistence ; and the last appears to have been graciously dispensed with by God, in consideration of the danger likely to arise out of it, during a life of constant travel. Now, however, that their wanderings were drawing to a close, and corn again within their reach, it became incumbent upon the Israelites to pay to these, no less than to other matters, divinely ordered, a rigid obedience ; and Joshua seized the first opportunity which offered, to enforce this solemn truth on their minds. He caused the passover to be kept with great solemnity, on the plains of Gilgal, previous to which, every male in the camp was circumcised ; and he permitted the people to enjoy a season of rest, till the effects of the latter operation ceased to be felt.

Whilst his followers were in this plight, Joshua went forth, on a certain occasion, unattended, to reconnoitre the defences of Jericho, and to arrange his plans for the conduct of the siege. He was thus employed, when there suddenly stood before him a warrior, clothed in complete armour, who brandished a drawn sword in his hand, and seemed prepared for battle. Nothing daunted by the apparition, Joshua instantly demanded whether he desired to be regarded as a friend, or a foe; but the stranger no sooner spoke, than Joshua fell on his face before him, and worshipped him, as the angel of the covenant, who had hitherto guided the journeys of God's people. By that mysterious being, he was instructed how it behoved him to attack Jericho; he was told that here, as in the passage of the Jordan, Jehovah would himself fight for Israel; and he returned to the camp with a perfect assurance that a great and bloodless victory awaited him.

In obedience to the instructions of the angelic warrior, Joshua no sooner perceived that the Israelites were in a condition to move, than he broke up his encampment, and advanced against Jericho. For six days the troops marched round the town, a company of priests going before, with the sound of trumpets; but on the seventh day, Jericho was encompassed seven times; and at the close of the last progress, the following event occurred: At a given signal, the priests blew their horns, and the people raised a shout. Upon this, the walls of the place fell flat upon the ground, as if shaken down by an earthquake; and the Israelites, rushing over the ruins, made themselves masters of Jericho. No quarter was given to any of the inhabitants, except such as sought shelter in the house of Rahab. Every living creature, both of man and beast, perished, and the houses being consumed by fire, Joshua loaded the very ruins with an execration, implying that he, who should presume to rebuild them, would do so to his sorrow.

The next place, against which Joshua turned his arms, was Ai, an inconsiderable though a fortified town, about twelve miles distant from Jericho. Thither he despatched a corps of three thousand men, which he considered perfectly competent to its reduction; but to his extreme mortification, the detachment was repulsed, and some loss, both in killed and wounded, experienced. Unimportant as such a defeat might be deemed, it nevertheless affected the Israelites with great sorrow. It was evident that the reverse had befallen them, not in the ordinary course of war, but in punishment of some act of disobedience; and no great while elapsed, ere Joshua was made aware of the nature of the offence committed. God had strictly enjoined, that no person should defile himself by retaining for his own use, any article of plunder taken from Jericho; and now, on being consulted by Joshua, he informed that chief, that one of the soldiers employed against Ai, had violated the command. The lot was promptly cast, in order to discover the criminal. It fell first upon the tribe of Judah, then upon the family of the Zarhites, next upon the house of Zabdi, and finally upon a man named Achan; who, seeing himself thus detected, at once acknowledged that he had been tempted to secrete certain articles of value underground, in his tent; these were produced before the congregation, in confirmation of the truth of his confession; and he was put to death by stoning, in the valley of Achor.

As soon as he had thus made expiation for the guilt of the people, Joshua put himself at the head of the whole army, and marched against Ai. The inhabitants, encouraged by their late victory, again sallied out in force, and the Israelites, by Joshua's orders, once more retreated, in seeming confusion. But Joshua had not been inattentive to his duty as a general. A strong division, moving at night, had lain down, pre-

vious to the arrival of the main body, in ambuscade, near the gate; and now rushing upon the place, emptied of its garrison, made themselves masters of it, without striking a blow. The success was signified to Joshua, by volumes of smoke, which rose from the burning town, when the latter, facing about, charged his pursuers, and overthrew them with great slaughter. Thus were the people of Ai totally defeated, their army cut to pieces, their capital destroyed, and every soul belonging to it put to the sword; whilst the king was hanged upon a gibbet until sunset, when he was taken down, cast into the gateway of the city, and a heap of stones raised over him.

The signal success which had hitherto attended the arms of Israel, increased the alarm of the nations which dwelt on the west of Jordan, insomuch that they entered into a strict alliance with one another, for the purpose of opposing the further progress of the strangers. One tribe alone, the Gibeonites, whose prudence was more conspicuous than their courage, refused to join the confederates; but resolving, at all hazards, to seek the protection of a people, whom they entertained no hope of being able to resist, they fell upon an exceedingly ingenious device for the attainment of their object. They despatched to Joshua's camp a certain number of crafty persons, arrayed in worn-out shoes, and soiled garments, and carrying mouldy bread in their wallets, and wine-skins torn and tarnished, who represented themselves as ambassadors from a remote country, the inhabitants of which, having heard of God's gracious dealings with the Israelites, were anxious to contract with them a league of amity and commerce. The Israelites, deceived by the appearance, not less than by the language of these men, readily consented to treat with them; and assured them, by the solemn pledge of an oath, of their favour

and protection. This was scarcely done, when the true state of the case became known; and though the oath had been extorted from them by a gross deceit, the Israelites did not consider themselves at liberty to retract it; on the contrary, the lives of the Gibeonites were spared, but Joshua imposed upon them terms scarcely more favourable than extermination itself; he reduced them to a state of absolute bondage, took from them all their property, and doomed them to be for ever "hewers of wood, and drawers of water," to the house of Abraham.

In the mean while, the other nations, five in number, put themselves under the command of Adoni-zedek, King of Jerusalem, and marched against Gibeon, with the design of wreaking vengeance upon it, in punishment of the desertion of its inhabitants from the common cause. The Gibeonites, sorely pressed, and in great alarm, sent messengers to Joshua, who instantly took the field, in order to support them. Making a night-march from his encampment, he attacked the army of the confederates at an early hour on the following day, and, taking them by surprise, gained a complete and easy victory. But God fought for Israel upon this occasion, not less palpably than upon others. As the routed Amorites fled from their pursuers, a shower of meteoric stones fell among them, which slew a greater number than had fallen by the sword of the Hebrews; whilst Joshua, finding that the darkness would rob him of half the fruits of his victory, commanded the sun to delay his setting, and the moon to remain stationary in heaven. Both the sun and the moon obeyed him; by which means he was enabled to continue the pursuit, till he had taken the confederate princes in the cave of Makkedah, and put their armies absolutely to the sword. The fate of these kings was similar to that which had been awarded to the chiefs of Jericho and Ai. Joshua caused

them to be hanged upon five trees till the evening, when they were cast into the cave where they had striven to find shelter; after which, the Israelites took possession of all the southern districts of Canaan, and returned to the standing camp at Gilgal.

It is not necessary to continue at length the history of Joshua's wars; let it suffice to state, that for several years he was constantly engaged in the conduct of hostilities, during which he overthrew successively one-and-thirty princes, and wrested from them their dominions. Thus were the Canaanites gradually driven out from before Israel, whilst such of them as escaped the exterminating sword of the invaders, fled in search of new settlements to distant countries. But Joshua was more than a successful warrior; his conquests were as yet but imperfectly secured, when he sent out commissioners to survey the country, and report upon its qualities; and he caused the whole to be divided in equal portions among the several tribes. To the tribes which were most numerous, the largest tracts of land were of course allotted; but the proportions were regulated according to the strictest laws of equity, and in perfect obedience to the will of God. Cities of refuge were at the same time established, the Levites' portion was carefully reserved, and all other matters duly attended to, which had been prescribed in the law of Moses. Finally, after calling together the leaders of the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, and dismissing them, with due acknowledgments, to their homes beyond Jordan, Joshua himself fixed his own habitation in the vicinity of Shiloh, where, having the tabernacle at hand, and the means of consulting God always within his reach, he continued, to the day of his death, to administer the general affairs of the nation.

From this period, until within a short time of Jo-

seph's decease, few events of moment occurred in Israel. On one occasion only, soon after the departure of the friendly tribes to their homes, a misunderstanding accidentally arose, which, but for the prudence of certain judicious persons, might have led to serious consequences. The Reubenites, Gadites, and Manassites, having erected a pillar, or altar, on the east bank of the Jordan, to commemorate their return to their own settlements, and to perpetuate the memory of their union with their brethren on the west, the latter became impressed with a suspicion, that idolatrous usages were about to be introduced among them. In their eagerness to check the progress of so heinous a crime, they proposed to march at once, with arms in their hands, against the apostates; but, being persuaded, first of all, to inquire into the designs of their brethren, it was happily ascertained that no ground for their fears existed. Thus, by judicious forbearance on the one part, and a prompt and frank statement of facts on the other, was a quarrel, not more unnatural in kind, than perilous in its consequences, avoided, and the Israelites dwelt, on both sides of the river, in peace and amity, and in obedience to the law of God.

Such was the state of things when Joshua, knowing that his end approached, summoned a general assembly of the princes and magistrates, with as many of the common people as could conveniently be brought together, at Shechem. To these, in an address full of tenderness and affection, he recapitulated the many blessings which God had bestowed upon the nation, by raising them up from a state of slavery and subjection, rendering them victorious over all their enemies, and settling them in a land which abounded with corn and wine, and pasturage for their flocks and cattle. He exhorted them to show their gratitude to their Almighty Benefactor, by paying an undeviating obedience to all

his laws, and, having prevailed upon them solemnly to renew the covenant, he recorded that act in the sacred volume, and set up a stone, under an oak, as a perpetual testimony against them, in case they should violate the pledge. This was the last public act of Joshua's life. He died soon after, in the 110th year of his age, and was buried at Timnath-serah, in Mount Ephraim, an estate which the Israelites, in acknowledgment of his signal services, had granted him.

Eleazar, the priest, who had been his companion in the government for many years, did not long survive him. He was buried in one of the hills of Ephraim, leaving his office to Phinehas, his son; and the funerals of these two great men reminding the people of what was still due to the bones of Joseph, the latter were, with much pomp, laid, by the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, beside the ashes of his father, in a parcel of ground near Shechem.

To the truth of the details given in the preceding pages, every one of our readers must be aware that a variety of objections have been started; but, as by far the greater proportion bear upon their faces marks of the perversity of intellect which dictated them, we consider it necessary to notice only a few of the most important. These, it is scarcely necessary to add, are limited to the miraculous passage of the Jordan; to the fall of Jericho, not after the ordinary labours of a siege, but by divine influence; to the shower of stones, which destroyed multitudes of the flying Amorites; and to the standing still of the sun and moon at the command of Joshua. No thinking person will pretend to deny, that such occurrences, considered as isolated facts, are exceedingly wonderful; the only question is, whether they be worthy of credence—in other words, whether the evidence, on which their authenticity depends, be satisfactory or otherwise.

In opposition to the scriptural account of the

passage of the Jordan, it has been urged, that the river being of a trifling width, and fordable in many places, it is much more reasonable to conclude that the Israelites took advantage of these fords and crossed by ordinary means, than that a miracle so striking was wrought in their favour for no assignable purpose. Our reply to this objection is necessarily akin to that which we used, when meeting a similar system of argument with respect to the passage of the Red Sea. Either the narrative given in the Book of Joshua is, to its minutest letter, correct, or the whole history from beginning to end must be fabulous. Though there are undeniably several fords in the Jordan, by one of which, indeed, Joshua's spies penetrated into the territory of Jericho, it is quite evident that the Hebrews, so far from being conducted towards these, were carefully led to a point in the river's course, where no ford is to be found, and where, to pass by any human means, otherwise than by a bridge, or by boats, was impracticable. They pitched their camp about eighteen miles above the commencement of the lake Asphaltites, where the Jordan, though of moderate breadth, is at all seasons deep and rapid, and they arrived there at the period of a flood, when the waters were out, so as to inundate the low lands on either bank to a considerable extent. All these circumstances are recorded in the Book of Joshua with marked minuteness, and hence it is impossible to believe that the writer could have fallen, unintentionally, into so glaring an error, as the objection attributes to him. As little is it conceivable that any man in his senses would venture to affirm, in the presence of a whole nation, that in such a transaction they were actors, had the tale been a fiction. Joshua, like Moses, addressed his book to the men and women before whose eyes all the wonders recorded in it were wrought; it is altogether beyond

the pale of credibility to suppose that he would have done so, had not the wonders taken place. Besides, Joshua took care to have other evidences, to the reality of the miraculous passage besides his own narrative. The stonehenge upon the plain of Gilgal has borne silent testimony for ages to the veracity of his account; for, of the occasion on which it was set up, there has never, from the time of its erection, been entertained a doubt. If it be further urged that the miracle may, after all, be resolved into the operation of a violent wind, such as that of which Horace speaks, as arresting the course of the Tiber; we answer that, admitting the truth of Horace's legend, which it may require some exertion to do, and supposing a similar accident to have befallen the Jordan, the difficulty attending the journey of the Israelites, so far from being diminished, is increased. Against a tempest sufficiently powerful to check the course of a deep and rapid river, a whole nation of men, women, and children, with numerous herds of cattle, and flocks of sheep, could not possibly make head. They would be scattered in all directions, like dust before the whirlwind, and utterly destroyed. On the whole, therefore, we are bound, either to receive the history as Joshua gives it, or to reject the authority of the Bible altogether, and of the difficulties attending the latter course, enough has been said already.

The same reasoning may be applied with equal force to the detail of the mode by which the walls of Jericho were beaten down. Every attempt, indeed, to explain that phenomenon upon what are termed natural principles, must end in an absurdity; for the phenomenon is absolutely beyond the reach of what is termed nature, and the story is told in language too explicit to admit of more than one interpretation. The whole transaction must, therefore, be received as

one more in addition to the many miracles, of the performance of which the Old Testament speaks, and it must be implicitly credited on the authority of that book, or the authenticity of the book itself must be denied. The case is somewhat different with respect to the shower of stones, which wrought so much damage to the Amorites, as well as to the standing still of the sun and moon at Joshua's command. Both of these events fall, to a certain degree, within the limits of ordinary occurrences, though their occurrence at the particular moment, when the necessities of the Israelites called for them, is, doubtless, just as much a miracle as any other recorded in Scripture.

With respect to the shower of stones, no fact can be more fully attested, than that such showers have fallen, to a greater or less extent, at various times, and in various parts of the world. Besides the accounts given by Livy and other ancient historians, we have had, in times comparatively modern, repeated instances of such occurrences. Thus, near Padua, in the year 1510, there fell a shower of about twelve hundred stones, one of which weighed twenty, and another sixty pounds; a shower of sand, which continued for about fifteen hours, fell, on the 6th of April, 1719, in the Adriatic; a shower of stones fell at Plann, near Tabor, in Bohemia, July 3, 1753; the same thing took place at Barbontain, near Roguefort, July 1789; there was an extensive shower of stones in the environs of Agen, July 24, 1790; another of about twelve stones at Sienna, in Tuscany, July 1794; and one greater than all, at Benares, on the 19th of December, 1798. How these stones are formed, or how, when formed, they are supported in the atmosphere, no one has pretended to explain; but the fact of their having been supported there, and afterwards falling to the earth, it is no more possible to doubt,

than it is possible to doubt our own existence. Why then should we hesitate to believe that the confederated Canaanites were overtaken by a similar shower and destroyed.

Again, though it be perfectly true that to speak of the sun standing still, or the moon ceasing to go down, is, in strict propriety, to speak incorrectly, nothing is more certain than that such language is employed every day, even among philosophers; as it probably has been employed in all countries and by all men, since the commencement of time. He, therefore, who would object to the miracle in question, on the ground of Joshua's making use of terms philosophically improper, must likewise be prepared to enter his protest against the vernacular language of all the countries under heaven. Whether Joshua himself understood the theory of the earth's movement upon its own axis, may very well be questioned; but even if he did, he would have appeared to those about him like one insane, had he commanded it to arrest its rotatory motion. But it is not here, we are well aware, that the chief difficulty lies. Would not a sudden check given to the rotatory motion of the earth, be productive of the most tremendous consequences? Would not the whole globe be shaken into chaos, and the equilibrium of the universe itself destroyed? It is idle to put these questions, because the power which was competent to retard the globe in its diurnal revolution, was equally competent to guard against any evil consequences arising out of it; but after all, there is no necessity for supposing that the whole earth was deranged in its course, in order that Joshua might complete a victory which he had already won. The prolonging of daylight over Gibeon, and the apparent lingering of the moon in the valley of Ajalon, may be very satisfactorily accounted for without supposing any such extraordinary event to have befallen, at the same time

that the truth of Sacred History is amply and clearly vindicated.

Every person acquainted with the first principles of natural philosophy, is aware that a ray of light passing obliquely out of a rare medium into one more dense; in other words, out of a thin into a thicker vapour, is bent at the point of incidence towards the perpendicular, and that it is bent more or less according to the density of the medium into which it passes. Hence it is that the sun appears still visible, when it can be mathematically demonstrated that he is several degrees under the horizon, whilst twilight lingers with us for hours after darkness might be expected to set in. Now, if such be the case at all times, what difficulty is there in supposing that God listened, on the occasion under review, to the spirit of Joshua's prayer, and produced the desired result by rendering the medium into which the sun's rays passed supernaturally dense, and making his disk visible at once over half or even the whole of the globe. There is surely nothing impossible in this, which is neither more nor less than an extension of a well-known power of the atmosphere; and if it be received as correct, then is the whole phenomenon explained without the occurrence of any such difficulty as might be supposed otherwise to attend it. But in truth it is hardly worth while to seek, in cases like the present, for support to the assertions of Scripture in the discoveries of science. By whatever means the light of that remarkable day was prolonged, God was indisputably the direct agent in prolonging it; nor was it more difficult for him to retard the motion of the earth on its axis, guarding all the while against any mischievous consequence, than to bend a ray of light to a degree such as never occurred before, and will probably never occur again.

There is yet one objection left to the truth of Jo-

shua's history, which we have chosen to notice by itself, not only because it is perhaps the most startling of all, but because the discussion of it will unavoidably lead us into a short review of the origin and moral state of the several nations with whom he waged war. The objection to which we allude turns upon the extreme severity of God's instructions, touching the treatment to be shown to the people of Canaan. The Israelites were enjoined, on no account whatever, to enter into treaties, or form alliances with them. They were to show no mercy, nor to have the smallest compassion; but to put every living creature indiscriminately to the sword, till the whole were absolutely destroyed, or driven out from before them. These are indeed tremendous orders, by whomsoever issued, and when regarded as emanating from the great Ruler of the universe, can hardly fail of exciting both horror and surprise. Yet a brief review of the condition of the nations against whom they were fulminated, will suffice to show that the decrees were absolutely necessary to the general benefit of mankind, and, as a necessary consequence, perfectly just.

The grand theatre of Joshua's warlike operations, comprised that portion of Asiatic Turkey, which is now known by the general name of Palestine, and is bounded on the north by Mount Libanus, which separates it from Syria; on the east by Mount Hermon, which divides it from Arabia Deserta; by the mountains of Sin and the deserts of Arabia Petræa on the south; and by the Mediterranean on the west. It was inhabited at the period of the Hebrew invasion by a great variety of tribes or nations, which derived their origin from widely different stocks, and lived each independently of its neighbours, under its own form of feudal government. Some of these, such as the Amorites, the Moabites, the Midianites, and the Edomites, who dwelt on the east and south of the

Jordan and the Dead Sea, could lay claim to an antiquity not more remote, than that of the Israelites themselves; others, which possessed the districts on the west of the river; namely, the Canaanites, the Philistines, and the Amalekites, had existed as nations long before the call of Abraham. All were, however, at one period or another opposed directly, or indirectly, to the Israelites, though the conduct of the Israelites towards them all, even in war, was by no means the same.

The Amorites, the Moabites, the Midianites, and the Edomites, as they were not included under the curse imposed upon the inhabitants of Canaan, so were they at no moment threatened by the children of Israel with a war of extermination. However corrupt they might be, and fearfully corrupt some of them at least unquestionably were, the measure of their iniquities came not up to that of the Canaanites, whilst their origin was so nearly akin to that of the Israelites themselves, as to afford an insuperable barrier to the excitation of vindictive feelings in the breasts of the latter against them. Thus the Amorites and the Moabites, being descended from Lot, could not be regarded as absolute aliens by the stock of Abraham; whilst the Midianites themselves springing from Abraham, as the Edomites were the seed of Isaac, through Esau, were clearly saplings from the same root. It would have been a gross violation of the instincts of nature, as well as directly opposed to God's dealings with their common ancestor, had the Israelites rushed upon these nations with the sword of desolation, and we accordingly find that they were commanded on no account whatever to molest their kindred, but to solicit a safeconduct through their territories into the land of promise. Had the request of the Israelites been complied with, we have every reason to believe that they would have marched in perfect order, and without committing a single act of hostility, to the

Jordan ; but such was not the case. Alarmed at the appearance of an armed host on their frontiers, the nations which skirted Canaan entered into alliances against them, and by commencing a war as unprovoked as it was impolitic, drew down upon themselves the vengeance of their conquerors. The Midianites and the Moabites in particular, who, joining fraud to violence, aimed at the ruin of the Israelites, by leading them into apostacy from Jehovah, suffered a tremendous but not unmerited chastisement : yet is it worthy of remark, that from none of these nations were any permanent conquests wrested. On the contrary, the only portion of territory of which the Israelites took possession, on the east or Arabian side of the Jordan, was a district belonging to the Amorites, a Canaanitish race, which had themselves won it by the sword, and which were now displaced to make room for the Reubenites, Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh.

But though such were the designs of the Israelites, and such their proceedings in relation to the tribes which dwelt without the boundary of Canaan, it is beyond dispute, that with the Canaanites themselves they came prepared to wage a war of absolute extermination, and that they were directly enjoined to do so by God himself, is repeatedly asserted in the Bible. The question accordingly arises, how far such conduct can be reconciled to our notions of perfect goodness and justice ; in other words, whether it be possible to believe that Almighty God could give over one entire race of men to the swords of another.

The only difficulty in this case appears to us to apply to the kind of means employed by God, in the execution of a great national judgment. That the Canaanites were a race of incorrigible idolaters, whose morals, from the most remote periods, were polluted to a degree hard to be imagined, we have the highest

of all authority for asserting. Descended from Canaan, the grandson of Noah, and taking early possession of the country which they now held, they appear to have given themselves up entirely to the practice of every vice which a depraved fancy could suggest : indeed we find that some of their cities were overwhelmed in the days of Abraham, with fire from heaven, as if nothing short of the utter extinction of all animal and vegetable life, could purify the polluted district. From the date of that occurrence downwards, their guilt, so far from diminishing, seems daily to have increased. Their religion was of the grossest and most debasing kind, the objects of their worship being some of the worst passions of human nature, at least the ceremonies, which that religion enjoined as acceptable to the gods, cannot, without a violation of all decency, be described. Human sacrifices were of frequent recurrence amongst them ; they gave their own children to be consumed in the furnace of Moloch ; in a word, the whole tenour of their existence was a series of offences against the laws, both of God and nature.

Had Jehovah, after bearing with such a people during no fewer than four centuries, sent upon them, at last, a famine or a pestilence, and cut them off from the face of the earth, no theist could for a moment deny that he acted with perfect justice. Had he again caused fire to fall upon them from heaven, or overwhelmed them by the waters of a flood, the same admission must have been made ; why then should it be urged, that he acted in opposition to any one of his known attributes, because he let loose yet another of his judgments upon them, namely war. For such, as far as they were affected, is really the case. The Israelites were towards them neither more nor less than instruments of punishment in the hands of the great Ruler of the universe, who chose to slay them by

the edge of the sword, rather than by severe and lingering sickness. If it be urged that to subject women and unoffending children to the horrors of war, is not in agreement with our notions of Divine justice, we reply that the very same observation might be made in the case of a plague or a deluge. Sickness and the waters spare neither age nor sex, yet sickness and the waters are permitted by Divine justice, to prevail equally with war. But it is not to the case of the Canaanites alone that we are to look, when considering this matter. The whole scheme of God's providence must be examined, and then it will be seen, that tremendous as the order of massacre may sound, it was given for the wisest and best of purposes.

The object for which the Israelites were chosen and kept apart from other nations, has already been explained; they were thus treated in order that some knowledge of true religion might be preserved in the world, and mankind gradually prepared for the coming of the Messiah. Now to effect this design, it was necessary to place before their eyes some striking and sensible proofs of God's abhorrence of idolatry; proofs which should affect them even more powerfully than the denunciations of Jehovah from Mount Sinai, or their own treatment in the wilderness. Such proofs were given in the command, which emanated from God himself, that no quarter should be shown to the Canaanites, accompanied as that command was with the declaration, that they were devoted to destruction in punishment of their crimes. It cannot be urged that even this purpose might have been equally well served, had God annihilated the Canaanites by a pestilence, previous to the arrival of the Israelites, and thus made room for them without causing their hands to be imbrued in the blood of so many of their fellow-creatures. No scene can make such an impression upon our minds as that in which we have ourselves

been actors, and hence, the effect of such a catastrophe, however vivid at the moment, would have been far more likely to pass away, than the effect produced by a series of successful wars, the success of which was made to depend upon the piety and obedience of those who waged them.

Again we learn from the inspired historian that the Canaanites were neither utterly exterminated, nor absolutely driven from their settlements either by Joshua or his immediate successors; on the contrary, out of the seven nations which possessed Palestine Proper, one only, the Gergashites, seems ever to have been entirely eradicated, and by far the larger proportion of it migrated into Africa, where they are supposed to have established flourishing colonies. Numbers of the others perished indeed, or fled from the sword of the Israelites, but still larger numbers remained, to dispute for ages, the possession of the land, with the invaders. Nor are excellent reasons for this wanting. One of these Moses himself adduces, when he says, that God would not drive out the nations from before his people all at once, lest the beasts of the forest should multiply upon them; whilst Joshua has assigned another, not less conclusive, by affirming that the Canaanites were permitted to remain, as trials of the faith and obedience of his countrymen. In every point of view, therefore, whether we look to the amount of suffering endured by the vanquished, or to the benefits accruing to the conquerors, and through them to all mankind, it was far more consonant to the wisdom and goodness of God, that the Canaanites should suffer by the sword of the Israelites, than that a pestilence or a famine should come among them, and sweep them from the face of the earth.

With respect again to the Amalekites and the Philistines, as both of these nations stood on grounds somewhat different from that occupied by the Ca-

naanites, so the treatment which the Israelites exhibited towards them was distinct. The Amalekites, a corrupt race, which derived their origin from Amalek, the son of Ham, if they came not under the original ban, which devoted the Canaanites to destruction, unquestionably excited the wrath of the Israelites, by their conduct towards them in the wilderness. It will be remembered that soon after the escape out of Egypt, the Amalekites attacked the people in the desert of Rephidim, and barbarously put to death all whom sickness or weariness compelled to straggle. Of this the Israelites were not unmindful, and hence the lasting antipathy which they nourished towards these, the earliest and the most ungenerous of their enemies. But in the case of the Philistines, matters bore a somewhat different aspect. With that people the Hebrews carried on frequent wars, in which both parties suffered severely, and Joshua assigned the territory without scruple to the tribes, because it lay within the bounds of the promised land ; but the Philistine wars were not like the wars with the Canaanites, wars of extermination, they aimed at conquest, or the imposition of tribute, but at nothing more. No doubt they were always conducted with extreme cruelty, for from cruelty, the vice of those early times, the Israelites were not more free than their neighbours ; but, as we shall have occasion to show in the course of the following history, they seldom ended in such massacres as those perpetrated at Jericho and Ai.

One word on the nature of the civil government under which these nations lived may not be amiss, were it only to meet a difficulty which has sometimes been started, touching the multitude of kings slain and kingdoms subdued by Joshua.

A very slight acquaintance with ancient history will be sufficient to teach us, that at the period of which

the inspired writer of the Book of Joshua treats, the patriarchal form of rule prevailed to a large extent, not only among the lesser, but among the greater nations. In Assyria, for example, and even in Egypt, though each had at its head one prince or king, who swayed the sceptre by hereditary right, and exercised authority over the whole empire, there existed multitudes of petty chiefs or princes, who, whilst they readily paid allegiance to their common superior, exercised, within the limits of their respective principalities, absolute power. Such arrangements, indeed, seem unavoidable in a state of society which has not yet attained to just notions touching the original rights of man; nor is the period very distant, even in this country, since a perfect specimen of them could be found among the Highlanders of Scotland. So in the Book of Genesis we read of the kings of Elam, Shinar, and Ellasar; of Tidal, the king of nations, and Bera and Birsha, with their allies: all of whom seem to have been no more than heads of clans or septs, independent in relation to one another, but subject to the King of Assyria.

In like manner the nations with which Joshua came into collision, appear all to have been parcelled out into clans or septs, which looked up to their hereditary chiefs as magistrates in time of peace, and as natural leaders in time of war. Thus the Edomites had their dukes, and the Moabites and Midianites their kings, whilst of the Canaanites no fewer than one-and-thirty princes are enumerated as having fallen in the progress of the first contests with the Hebrews. It is quite manifest that these could have been nothing more than leaders of hordes, similar in most respects to our own highland clans; though it is extremely probable that there was one in each nation superior to the rest, to whom they paid the same kind of obedience which our Highland chiefs were in the habit of

paying to the Scottish monarch. He, therefore, who hesitates to receive the declarations of Holy Writ, because these happen not to accord, in every respect, with his own preconceived opinions, will do well to make himself acquainted with facts as they stand, and he will find that it is not Scripture, but his own mind which is in error, by attaching to terms a different sense from that which they were intended to convey.

CHAPTER XIII.

Death of Joshua.—Government of the judges.—Apostacies and punishments of the Israelites.—Objections stated and answered.

A. M. 3829 to 4259.—B. C. 1582 to 1152.

THE death of Joshua appears to have restored to the children of Israel that ancient and universal system of rule, which gives to the head of each family the direction and control of all its members. Unlike his predecessor in power, the great Hebrew leader nominated no chief magistrate to succeed him; and the events first recorded after his decease, clearly establish the fact, that to every tribe was thenceforth committed the management of its own affairs, with full powers of waging war and making peace, independently of the advice or sanction of any general senate. As the state of society to which such an arrangement gave birth was exceedingly curious, and as some knowledge of it is essential to a right understanding of the whole narrative of Sacred History, it may not be amiss if we endeavour, in this place, to give a short account of it.

From the earliest times, the descendants of Jacob appear to have been subject to no other rule than that which nature, not less than the will of their great ancestor pointed out. Even amidst the pressure of Egyptian bondage, we find traces of the patriarchal form of government, more especially as the hour drew

nigh which was to witness their deliverance; when Moses, after receiving his commission, was commanded by Jehovah to gather the elders of Israel together, and to communicate with them. In like manner, when the law was delivered from Mount Sinai, a similar distinction was made between the heads of families and their clansmen, Aaron and the rulers of the congregation advancing *first* to converse with Moses, "and afterwards all the children of Israel."*

This natural jurisdiction of family chiefs seems for a time to have been necessarily superseded by the military power of the inspired lawgiver, who, during the sojourn in the wilderness, on the confines of the promised land, was obeyed, not alone as a civil magistrate, but also as the commander of the armies of Israel, and the lieutenant of the Lord of Hosts. The same system prevailed to a still greater degree under Joshua, who, till the conquest of Canaan was effected, appears in the single light of a successful general; whilst in the congregation of the Hebrews is seen only a band of veteran soldiers, rendered hardy by long service in a parching climate, and formidable by the acquisition of discipline, under a skilful leader. "From the Exode, in short, till towards the end of Joshua's administration, we lose sight of that simple scheme of domestic superintendence which Jacob established among his sons. The princes of tribes, and the heads of families, were converted into captains of thousands, of hundreds and of fifties, regulating their movements by the sound of the trumpet, and passing their days of rest amidst the vigilance and formality of a regular encampment."†

The necessity for this order of things no sooner ceased by the acquisition of fixed settlements, and the

* Exodus iii. 16.

† Russell's Connexion of Sacred and Profane History.

partial overthrow of their enemies, than the Israelites again reverted to their more ancient form of society. The land being divided, as described in the preceding chapter, Joshua, we read, "sent the people away;" and from that moment the military gave place to the patriarchal model, upon which, indeed, it had been no more than a compulsory innovation. Still Joshua, during the remainder of his life, appears to have exercised an authority paramount to that of all other officers in the congregation. He continued to be the head of a confederation of republics, as he had previously been the generalissimo of an allied army; and though we do not read of references made to him, from any of the inferior tribunals, this furnishes no ground for supposing that he ever retired absolutely into private life.

The Hebrews were unquestionably too impatient to enjoy the fruits of their successes, and Joshua gave, perhaps, too ready a consent to their so doing. Instead of continuing the war until the Canaanites had been completely expelled, they no sooner drove them from the open country, than they themselves began to sow and plant; whilst treaties were improvidently entered into with the very nations which they had been commissioned to extirpate. Whilst Joshua survived, and indeed for some time after, no evil consequences appear to have arisen out of these arrangements. The memory of their recent defeats kept the Canaanites quiet, and the Israelites, satisfied with what they had already done, seemed more anxious for repose, than for fresh conquests; nor was it till they began to feel their settlements too narrow, that they entered upon a renewal of hostilities. The following appears to be a correct outline of the political and social relations which then existed, and which under certain modifications continued to exist, during five centuries, throughout Israel:

With respect to the form of government, it came as near to the patriarchal, as was at all consistent with the administration of a code, upon which no innovation could be made. Every tribe had its prince, or head, the lineal representative of the patriarch from whom the whole were descended, to whom his brethren looked up as their chief magistrate in seasons of peace and their natural leader or general in case of war. Subordinate to the prince were the heads of families; the term being used not in its ordinary acceptation to signify a mere household, but rather in the heraldic sense, to denote a lineage or kindred, descended from a common ancestor, and constituting one of the main branches of the original stock. To what amount these lineages prevailed we are informed in the 26th chapter of the Book of Numbers, where the heads are described as amounting to fifty-seven in all. Again, there was an authority still inferior to that of the heads of families, in the heads of households, the fathers, or representatives of the fathers of a common posterity, from among whom, beyond a question, the petty judges of towns and cities were chosen. All these officers, it will be observed, exercised over the people an authority which claimed to rest upon the distinctions of nature, though they were equally incapable of acting in any instance, except agreeably to the law of Moses.

In perfect accordance with this simple system of rule, was the distribution of property, and the establishment of locations among the Israelites. To every tribe was assigned a definite portion of territory, complete within itself, while the tribe was settled according to its families; and as these were arranged with a strict attention to the contiguity of kindred households, each individual may be said to have dwelt in the midst of his relations. Again, there was no man in Israel who could not boast of his own little farm or estate, which the fundamental laws of the land ren-

dered inalienable. Whatever his difficulties might be, the utmost that he was permitted to do was, to dispose of that patrimony for a period of forty-nine years, and as the right was never taken away from him of redeeming it at any moment, so the estate absolutely reverted to himself or to his heirs at the year of the jubile.

The effect of this agrarian law in a country where commerce and manufactures were long unknown, was to perpetuate among the people that equality of rank and political importance which appears to have been one of the main objects of Moses when he framed the Hebrew constitution. As land was not permitted to be sold, no individual could attain to any marked ascendancy over his brethren; and as every householder inherited a portion of the soil, sufficient to maintain in comfort a large family, no Israelite could be reduced to a state of absolute indigence. But these were not the only good effects arising out of it. All land being held in Israel, on military tenure, every male capable of bearing arms was liable to be called upon as often as the exigencies of the state required, and hence a numerous militia was supported, without the burden of taxes, or the remotest danger to civil liberty. It is to be observed, moreover, that with the exception of tithes which were dedicated to the support of the tabernacle, and the use of the Levites, no burdens of any kind were imposed upon the twelve tribes. Their chiefs and rulers, nay, their supreme judges, as often as such were chosen, all maintained themselves out of the produce of their own estates, which, in the case of hereditary princes and heads of families, were large in proportion to the rank in society held by the proprietors.

Such, in few words, is an outline of the social system, as it prevailed in every one of the twelve tribes, which seem, during the space of nearly five centuries, to have been held together, more after the fashion of

a confederation of independent states, than as forming a single empire. That the chiefs occasionally met to consult upon great matters, such as appeared to affect the common weal of the whole nation, is undeniable; and that the profession of a common religion, at the head of which was, of course, a high-priest, as well as the necessity of meeting at stated periods before the tabernacle, and consulting the oracle of Urim and Thummim, tended to keep them in remembrance, even during the times of anarchy, that they belonged to the same stock, is equally true; but till the aristocratic gave place to the monarchical form of government, it can hardly be said, that from the period of Joshua's demise, there was any permanent organ of supreme power in Israel. As to the council of seventy established by Moses in the wilderness, that seems to have been a mere temporary expedient, which ceased to work after the entrance into Canaan, and was not revived till the return of the Jews from the Assyrian captivity. Each prince of a tribe seems, indeed, to have had his council, composed of the heads of families, without whose sanction no business of importance was undertaken; and an appeal appears likewise to have been practicable to the voice of the people at large, but the notions of the rabbins touching the antiquity and influence of the sanhedrim are altogether erroneous.

We have said nothing as yet of the particular personages, from whom the seventh book in the Bible derives its title. These, as has been already hinted, appear to have been unknown for some time after Joshua's death, and when they were appointed, the origin of their powers, the nature of their qualifications, nay, their very duties seem to have varied, according to a chain of circumstances which it is by no means easy to follow. Some of them were unquestionably called to their office by the united voice of the nation, others seem to have been divinely inspired to attempt

the deliverance of their countrymen from oppression ; a third description again are those who entered into regular negotiations with certain of the tribes, over whom, without reference to their brethren, they exercised authority, whilst such men as Samson, whose sole business was to harass, rather than defeat the foreign enemy, belong to a class absolutely by themselves. But, though all this be perceptible enough, it were vain to attempt any particular definition of the order or routine of the judge's office. There is nothing in history, in any degree parallel to it. Neither the Grecian archon, nor the Roman consul, nor the Carthaginian Suffites, to whom it has sometimes been likened, bear the smallest resemblance to it. The archon and consul were ordinary magistrates, the Suffites were periodically elected in their respective states, and even the Roman dictator differed in this remarkable respect from the Hebrew judges, that he was never chosen except for a limited period.

Now the Hebrew judges were not essential to the Hebrew constitution ; they came into power only on pressing emergencies ; though, when once elected, they retained their influence during life, as well in peace as in war. We confess ourselves, therefore, incompetent to give any more circumstantial account of them, than that they appear to have been officers especially raised up, without regard to tribes, families, or households, as often as the wants of the congregation required.

There remains one order of persons, of whom it is necessary to say something, previous to entering upon a narrative of the events which occurred after the demise of Joshua.

The Levites, as we need scarcely observe, were divided into two orders, of which the priests, taken exclusively from the family of Aaron, formed one, and the rest of the families formed the other. It was pe-

cularly the business of the priests to attend upon the sanctuary, to offer sacrifices, and to superintend the general religious rites of the people; to the rest of the Levites was intrusted a variety of duties, all of them more or less connected with sacred things. These were to the nation at large readers and interpreters of the law, scribes, physicians, and teachers of science; and as such occupations were entirely at variance with agricultural or pastoral pursuits, no separate portion of territory was assigned to those who practised them. On the contrary, the Levites were distributed throughout all the tribes, among each of whom they possessed settlements of their own, besides having a claim upon their brethren, to the amount of one-tenth part of the gross produce, both of the soil and of the flocks. From the tithes thus raised, a tenth part was expended in the maintenance of the priesthood, and the supply of the tabernacle with victims and suitable furniture, whilst the remaining nine parts went to the support of the Levites wheresoever they might be located; and it is to be observed, that from among the cities of the Levites, six were invested with the special privilege of affording refuge and protection to a certain class of criminals.

How far the high-priest, especially during the season of anarchy, deserved to be esteemed the permanent head of the nation, it is not very easy to determine. At all epochs, he held the highest religious rank, and as the constitution of the Hebrews was, in the main, a theocracy, it may be supposed that he could not but fill, at the same time, the office of supreme civil magistrate; but the case appears not to have been so. Neither Gideon, nor Jephthah, nor even Joshua himself, was high-priest: yet Joshua, Gideon, and Jephthah were each in his turn at the head of the Hebrew republic. The truth, therefore, appears to be, that to the high-priest belonged, by virtue of his office, a

superiority purely spiritual, such as the right of offering up the great sacrifices to God, and of consulting the will of the Most High, as often as it was solicited, by Urim and Thummim, a species of oracle, concerning which so many opposite opinions are held, that we are neither willing nor able to hazard an opinion respecting it. Whatever it might have been, however, whether there came an audible voice from God, or the characters on the priest's breastplate conveyed the response, the high-priest alone appears to have been regularly qualified to solicit it; though, in extraordinary cases, God declared his will to such prophets as Samuel, and even to Deborah, independently of that functionary.

B. C. It has been stated, that the first events on
1596. record, after the demise of Joshua, furnish strong ground for believing, that that remarkable man having nominated no individual to succeed him, the tribes generally submitted each to the authority of its own patriarchal chiefs, as well in war as in peace. We accordingly find, that after a certain time the tribes of Judah and Simeon formed an alliance, and carried their arms successfully against the king of Bezek, whom they defeated and took prisoner. Their leader appears to have been Caleb, the companion of Joshua, and the only survivor of the twelve spies who had first visited the land of Canaan, by whose orders the captive sovereign was mutilated in the same manner in which he had mutilated no fewer than seventy petty princes. Their next expedition was against Jerusalem, the lower town of which they took and burned, but the fortress on Mount Sion holding out against them, they marched off and laid siege to Hebron. Here Othniel, Caleb's nephew, led a fortunate assault, by which the place was carried, and he received, as a reward, the hand of Caleb's daughter, Achsah, with a considerable estate in land as her portion.

For what purpose these wars were waged, whether in revenge for some inroads effected by the Canaanites, or because the tribes found themselves straitened for room, we possess no means of determining; but the impetus once given, ceased not for some time to be felt. The confederates having subjugated all the hill-country around Jerusalem, with the southern districts towards Pera, and assigned them to the tribe of Judah, attacked the provinces of Gaza, Askelon, Zephath, and Ekron, all of which they overran, and gave up to the Simeonites. In like manner the tribe of Benjamin formed expeditions against the Jebusites, as the house of Joseph did against the Hittites, whose chief city, Beth-el, they succeeded, by the treachery of an inhabitant, in capturing. But the object of these excursions seems to have been by no means such as the injunctions of God, through Moses and through Joshua, required. The tribes having removed the cause of uneasiness which drove them into hostilities, not only abstained from pushing their successes further, but contracted bonds of amity and alliance with the heathens. The consequence was, that the manners and morals of the Israelites soon became corrupt: they gradually adopted the practices of their new allies, as well religious as civil, and no great while elapsed ere they were made to feel, that in so doing they had acted in direct opposition to their own best interests.

B. C.
1582. It was at this period of Jewish history, when, to use the language of Scripture, there "was no king," or chief ruler in Israel, "but every man did that which was right in his own eyes;" that certain events befell, to which, as they are recorded towards the end of the Book of Judges, the ordinary reader is at a loss to assign any precise date. The events to which we allude, are the glaring act of idolatry of which the Danites were guilty, when in search of a settlement towards the north; and the abuse

of the Levite's wife, which brought about the civil war, so fatal to the tribe of Benjamin. A few words will suffice to convey a sufficiently correct picture of both transactions.

The tribe of Dan, overawed by the chariots of the Amorites, were compelled to abandon the low countries, which had fallen to them, and dwelt for a time in the mountains, where they were sorely straitened for room. Having heard that the inhabitants of Laish, a Sidonian colony, lived in an unguarded and insecure condition, they despatched five of their brethren to ascertain the truth of the rumour, with the intention, in case it should prove well founded, of surprising and taking possession of the district. The spies happened to lodge, on their journey, with one Micah, whose mother had made an ephod and a zeraphim for her gods, and who had prevailed upon a wandering Levite to accept the office of priest to these gods of silver. Him they consulted as to the issue which should attend their journey, and as he happened to predict a successful termination, they with an unaccountable infatuation, became infected with Micah's idolatry. The consequence was, that finding all things fall out as the priest had foretold, they stated the case to their brethren, who immediately armed themselves, to the number of six hundred, and advanced against Laish. The line of their march necessarily led them past the residence of Micah. From thence, at the suggestion of the five spies, they carried off the graven images, persuading the Levite, at the same time, to accompany them, and having succeeded in the conquest of Laish, they set up the idols there, and paid to them divine worship.

Whilst the Danites were thus polluting themselves, an outrage was perpetrated at Gibeah, which led to one of the most destructive civil wars on record. It

happened that a certain Levite, whose wife had for some cause or another deserted him, came from Mount Ephraim to Beth-lehem-judah in search of her, and finding her at her father's house, succeeded, through the intervention of her parents, in becoming reconciled to her. This done, he set out on his return home, with his wife, a single servant, and an ass; but being benighted at Gibeah, a town which belonged to the tribe of Benjamin, he determined to abide there till the morrow. For some time, however, no one invited him to his house; but, at last, a man of his own tribe took him in, and treated him with the hospitality for which the ancients were remarkable.

In the mean while, a troop of dissolute young men, by whom the extreme beauty of the Levite's wife had not passed unnoticed, surrounded the house, and in spite of the best exertions of the owner to prevent the outrage, seized the woman, and shamefully abused her. She died under their cruel treatment, and her husband, inflamed to the highest pitch of fury, fell upon the following expedient for obtaining revenge: He conveyed the body of his murdered wife home, cut it into twelve pieces, and sending one to the chief residence of each of the tribes, he made them acquainted with the barbarous manner in which he had been treated. There was but one feeling of horror and indignation throughout Israel. The princes of the eleven tribes, assembling in solemn council, determined that ample punishment should be inflicted on the guilty, and sent messages to the chiefs of Benjamin to surrender them; but the Benjamites, irritated at the manner in which the request was made, refused to comply with it. A furious war ensued, in which the Benjamites twice defeated their countrymen with prodigious slaughter; but in a third battle, the eleven tribes gained a great victory, and utterly

destroyed the tribe of Benjamin, of which no more than six hundred men, and four hundred young women, were left alive.

They had scarcely gratified their fury, when it evaporated, giving place to a feeling of extreme commiseration at the desolate state of their brethren. This was the more powerful, because the other tribes, in the height of their indignation, had solemnly vowed not to contract any alliances with the guilty Benjamites; and as there were not left women enough belonging to the tribe of Benjamin to furnish the men with wives, serious apprehensions began to be entertained as to the consequences. To avert these, the tribes adopted a device, which will, doubtless, recall to the reader's recollection the means employed by Romulus for peopling his new city. They reminded the Benjamites, that at certain seasons of the year festivals were held at Shiloh, during which the young women went out and danced by themselves, and giving them assurance that no obstacle would be thrown in their way, they left them to make what use they chose of the hint. The Benjamites were not backward in availing themselves of the opportunity. Lying wait among the woods and groves near, they seized the young women belonging to the other tribes, as they came forth, and carrying them away to their own cities, provided themselves each man with a wife.

The picture which these details convey of the state of religion and morals in Israel is so revolting, that did we not find Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, still alive to consult the Almighty concerning the issue of the war with Benjamin, we should be disposed to withdraw the scene of so much guilt and infatuation to seasons more remote from the times of Moses and Joshua. That circumstance, however, at once establishes the fact, that the occurrences related

above befell during the period of anarchy, and that the crimes on record were perpetrated by the very men who had witnessed the miraculous passage of the Jordan and capture of Jericho. But their iniquity was not permitted to pass unrebuked. The sacred narrative informs us, that an angel, or messenger, of the Lord came up from Gilgal, and upbraided the Hebrews with their inconstancy and backsliding, reminding them of their obligations to make no league with the people of the land, but to throw down their altars, and destroy every memorial of their superstitions. He repeated also the denunciations which they had formerly heard from the mouth of Joshua, that the Almighty would no longer go forth with their armies—that he would not drive the heathen from before their faces, but leave them in possession of the country, that they might act as thorns in their sides, and snares in their paths. For a brief season his remonstrances seem to have had weight with them, for they humbled themselves before Jehovah, offered sacrifices, and, in commemoration of the event, named the spot where the vision appeared, Bochim. But the spirit of piety soon gave place to a more determined apostacy than ever. “The children of Israel forsook the Lord God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the Lord to anger; and they forsook the Lord, and worshipped Baal and Ashtaroth.” The consequence was, that God withdrew from them his supernatural protection. The Canaanites, and other nations around, recovering from their panic, made repeated incursions into their territory, laying waste their fields, and putting all before them to the sword, whilst the Israelites, as often as they ventured to meet their enemies in battle, were defeated.

Such was the state of affairs when Chushan-rishathaim

King of Mesopotamia, advancing against Israel,
B. C. completely subdued it, and imposed a heavy
1572. tribute upon the people. This lasted during
eight years, at the end of which time, the tribes hav-
ing repented, God raised up the first of those officers
called Judges, who put the Mesopotamian
B. C. troops to the rout. His name was Othniel;
1564. he was the same individual whose gallantry at
Hebron won for him a bride and a portion; and he
judged or governed Israel forty years, during which the
land was at rest. But he had scarcely given up the
ghost, when the people again apostatized, and were
again punished, by being made subject to
B. C. Eglon, King of Moab. That monarch, assisted
1524. by his allies, the Amorites and Amalekites,
held Israel in subjection for eighteen years, when ano-
ther deliverer arose in the person of Ehud, who, after
assassinating Eglon at a private conference, stirred up
his countrymen to rebellion, and cut to pieces the
hosts which had so cruelly oppressed them.
B. C. A third judge is mentioned, by name Shamgar,
1506. the son of Anath, who slew six hundred men
of the Philistines with an ox-goad; and who appears
to have belonged to that class of officers, of whom we
have already named Samson as a specimen.

The death of Ehud was followed, as usual,
E. C. by a relapse, on the part of the Israelites, into
1426. idolatry, in punishment of which, God gave
them over to Jabin, who styled himself King of Ca-
naan, and kept his court at Hazor. That prince pos-
sessed a force of nine hundred chariots of iron, against
which the Hebrews, who fought on foot, could offer no
opposition; and Sisera, his general-in-chief, being an
active and able soldier, soon extended his conquests
over the whole land. For twenty years they continued
subject to this galling yoke, in a state of abject vas-
salage to the Canaanites, who seem, however, to have

left to them their own laws, with the power of electing their own chief-magistrates. The latter office was filled by a woman, named Deborah, a resident in Mount Ephraim, between Ramah and Beth-el, who became, at last, the instrument of their deliverance. Seeing them thoroughly humbled, and incited to the measure

by Divine inspiration, she called upon Barak,
 B. C. the son of Abinoam, to raise the standard of
 1406. revolt, and ten thousand men gathering round

it, she accompanied him in his march to Mount Tabor. Here a great battle was fought, in which Sisera suffered a complete defeat, his chariots being taken, and his troops put to the sword, for the Lord fought for Israel, as he had been accustomed to do in earlier and better times.

The fate of Sisera himself was exceedingly hard. Seeing his army destroyed, he fled on foot, and took refuge in the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber, the Kenite, one of the race from among whom Moses selected his wife, and who had followed the fortunes of the Israelites into Canaan. With that person Sisera happened to be on friendly terms, and, on Jael's entreating him to seek shelter under her protection, he readily obeyed the summons. But Jael, unlike Rahab, the publican of Jericho, not only took no pains to conceal her guest, but with her own hand put him to death. She came upon him when asleep and unsuspecting of treachery, and, driving a nail through his temples, pinned him to the ground. For this she was applauded by Deborah in a song of extreme beauty, composed and uttered in the moment of triumph; but there is not one word in the Bible to authorize the opinion, that her conduct was approved in the sight of the Most High.

For about forty years after this great victory, the Israelites appear to have enjoyed rest from foreign invasion, though it is extremely doubtful, whether their

moral and religious conduct continued all that while unimpeachable. On the contrary, as we find the land visited by a severe famine, it seems more than probable that idolatry was not wholly eradicated, though it might not appear in a form so outrageous as it had recently assumed. The effect of the scarcity, however, was such as to drive many individuals into exile, and, among others, one Elimelech, a man of Beth-lehem, with his wife Naomi, and his two sons, Mahlon and Chilion. These retiring into Moab, dwelt there; and the young men took to themselves wives, of the daughters of the land; soon after which, both they and their father died, leaving three widows. It was now that Naomi came to the determination of revisiting her own country; but as her daughters-in-law had no natural connexion there, she proposed to leave them behind. Orpah consented, though with tears, to the separation; but Ruth would, by no means, abandon her mother-in-law; so the latter conducted her to Beth-lehem, where she was, in the end, married to Boaz.*

B. C. At the end of these forty years, Deborah,
1366. and Barak died; and the announcement of their death was received by the infatuated Israelites, as a signal for a renewed apostacy. Once

* We have hurried through this tale with much greater rapidity than its extreme beauty and pathos might appear to authorize, simply because it relates to private matters, but little connected with the general history. Its appearance in the sacred canon at all can, indeed, be accounted for only on one ground, and that is unquestionably a strong one. "It had been foretold to the Jews, that the Messiah should be of the tribe of Judah; and it was afterwards revealed further, that he should be of the family of David, and therefore it was necessary, to the full understanding of these prophecies, that the history of the family of David, in that tribe, should be written before these prophecies were revealed, so that there might not be the least suspicion of any fraud or design. And thus, this book, these prophecies, and the accomplishment of them, serve to illustrate and explain each other."—*Bedford's Scripture Chronology*, lib. 5. c. 5.

more, therefore, God punished them, by bringing against them the Midianites and the Amalekites, who entered their country in countless numbers, and totally subdued it. In this plight, the people again cried unto the Lord, who, after rebuking them by the mouth of a prophet, raised up for their deliverance a cham-

B. C.
1359. pion, in the person of Gideon, a poor man of the inconsiderable tribe of Manasseh. This man, as soon as God had vouchsafed to him irrefragable proofs of his divine commission, first called his kindred the Abi-ezrites to arms, and then gathered around him two-and-thirty thousand men from the neighbouring tribes, with whom he boldly advanced against the Midianitish host, which was calculated to exceed one hundred and thirty thousand combatants.

The troops being assembled, Gideon entreated of God that he would exhibit before them some sensible proof, that the present rising was not dictated by mere human ambition, and his prayer was heard in a very remarkable manner. He laid a fleece of wool upon the ground, and entreated, one night, that the dew might fall upon it alone, whilst the earth around was dry; on the second night, that the fleece alone might be dry, whilst the surrounding soil was moist. In both instances it happened according to his wish; and his followers, greatly encouraged, set forward to encounter the Midianites. But even now, God was not willing that the battle should be fought with the arm of flesh. First of all he directed proclamation to be made, that all who desired, might retire in peace from the army; a permission, of which no fewer than twenty thousand men availed themselves; and next he commanded that Gideon should lead against the enemy only such, out of the remaining ten thousand, as drank, from a river which it behoved them to cross, by lapping up the water in their hands. This second injunction reduced

Gideon's disposable column to three hundred men; yet even with these he did not hesitate to give the assault; and he employed the following stratagem, at God's suggestion, in conducting it :

As soon as the night set in, he supplied his chosen cohort each with a lamp, an empty pitcher, and a trumpet; and dividing them into three bands, he penetrated silently into the heart of the enemy's encampment. Having succeeded thus far, the Israelites, at a given signal, suddenly broke their pitchers, their lamps flared out, they raised a shout, and, blowing with their trumpets, they caused the Midianites to imagine that they were beset on all sides by many thousand warriors. A scene of indescribable confusion followed. The Midianites, rising from sleep, fell upon one another with great fury; and the immense host, which but a few hours before had been a terror to the bravest, perished by the swords of its own members. Nor did the remnants escape. On the return of daylight, the ten thousand men whom Gideon had left in position, came pouring down upon the fugitives; the fords of the Jordan were occupied, other tribes ran to arms, and with the exception of one division of about fifteen thousand men, under the command of two princes named Zebah and Zalmunna, which succeeded in passing the river, the whole of the Midianitish army perished.

In the mean while Gideon, who with his three hundred champions followed close upon the heels of the retreating column, came to Succoth and Penuel, on the coast of the Jordan, from whose rulers he solicited a supply of provisions for his exhausted troops. This was rudely and insolently refused, his small and wearied band being spoken of with contempt; but those who indulged their spleen on that occasion, found reason afterwards to deplore that they had not acted with greater prudence, as well as patriotism.

Gideon overtook, and routed the fugitives, made their leaders prisoners, and carrying them back to Succoth, first chastised the magistrates for their recent misconduct, and then slew Zebah, and Zalmunna, in the presence of the townspeople. The effect of these great successes was not only to deliver the Israelites from slavery, but to obtain for Gideon himself the highest consideration and renown. His countrymen, indeed, pressed upon him the acceptance of royal authority, which he with great modesty declined; but he continued to govern them during the remainder of his days with equity and prudence. The only ill-judged act, indeed, if which he can fairly be accused, was the formation of an ephod, or priest's robe, out of the plunder which he had taken; for though he probably did so with no other design than that it should remain a monument of his victory, it became, after his decease, an object of idolatrous worship to the infatuated Hebrews.

B. C. 1319. A variety of strange and shameful transactions ensued upon the death of Gideon. He left behind him a family of seventy legitimate sons, besides one named Abimelech, who was born to him of a concubine, and who soon began to aim at that regal state, which his illustrious father had rejected. This person, having surprised sixty-nine of his brothers, slew them all upon a stone at Ophrah; one only, whose name was Jotham, and who chanced to be the youngest of the whole, escaping. He next presented himself to the Shechemites, as a candidate for supreme power; and, strange to say, his massacre of so many near relatives, was not esteemed an obstacle to the attainment of his views. He was accordingly placed upon the throne; but within the short space of three years, the Shechemites repented of their choice, and raised seditions and revolts against him. In one of these he perished, having previously slain

another ambitious man, named Gaal, who was his rival for the throne.

Such proceedings, accompanied as they were with flagrant and gross apostacies, paved the way for fresh punishments, of which the Philistines on the one side, and the Ammonites on the other, became the instruments. Against the inroads of these people, the judges Tola and Jair seem to

have made no head; nor did there arise any one capable of opposing them, till at the end of eighteen years of suffering the people were again convinced of their folly. By this time, however, the provinces on the east of Jordan were totally

subdued; those on the west were devastated and sorely harassed, and the whole extent of the Hebrew territory had felt the scourge of war.

It so happened that there dwelt in the land of Tob, a tract of country on the borders of the desert, a certain man called Jephthah, the son of Gilead by a foreign wife, and as such, an object of dislike to his brethren. This man having been violently deprived of his share in the inheritance, betook himself to the region specified above, where he gathered together a band of freebooters, and lived by plunder. The fame of his exploits soon spread throughout the country round, and the elders of Gilead, presuming that he who could thus set fate at defiance, would be a fit person to command them in a meditated revolt against the Ammonites, easily persuaded the troops that had assembled to elect him as their general. Jephthah did not accept the offer till he had rebuked his countrymen for their past injustice, as well as stipulated for proper treatment in all time coming; but, being assured that he should continue governor for life, he accompanied the messengers to Mizpeh, where he put himself at the head of the Hebrew army. His first measure after reaching the camp, was to send

ambassadors to the King of Ammon, to remonstrate with him on the injustice of his invasion. To the remonstrance no heed was paid; upon which Jephthah put his columns in motion, and advanced against the enemy. As the armies were now approaching, Jephthah, in accordance with the custom of the times, made a vow that in case God granted him the victory he would devote to Jehovah that creature, whatever it might be, which should first meet him from his own house on his return. It was a rash oath, and cost him who took it no trifling pang; for the victory was won, and the victorious warrior was first met on his return by his only daughter. But the vow was taken, and could not be retracted. The maiden having obtained a respite of two months, in which she bewailed her sad destiny among the mountains, submitted to her fate, and was consecrated to a state of perpetual virginity and attendance on the sanctuary.

From what cause it arose we are nowhere informed; but the war with the Ammonites was scarcely finished, when the tribe of Ephraim took up arms against Jephthah. They were defeated with great slaughter; no fewer than 42,000 being slain, after which Jephthah honourably administered the affairs of the nation during six years, when he died.

From this period, during an interval of three-and-twenty years, the children of Israel seem to have enjoyed a perfect peace. Three individuals are named in the sacred volume as successively filling the office of judge at that time, concerning whom, as no act of theirs stands on record, it is fair to conclude that their administration was just and undisturbed. But a state of repose was never favourable to piety and virtue in Israel. Once more we find that wayward nation breaking out into rebellion against Jehovah, and delivered, as a necessary conse-

B. C.
1222.

quence, into the hand of the Philistines, by whom they were, more or less, oppressed during forty years. It was then that an individual flourished, whose actions far surpassed those of any fabled hero of antiquity, but of whom it may truly be said, that his career is better calculated to excite our astonishment than to add to our edification.

B. C. The history of Samson is, from first to last,
1202. a continued series of wonders. Conceived and born under the especial superintendence of the Most High, he seems to have been from his childhood devoted to one purpose, which, as he advanced in years, he fulfilled in a striking manner. It had been commanded his mother, by the angel who announced his birth, that he should abstain from strong drink, and that his head should on no account be shorn; and in this plight he grew up from infancy to manhood. The consequence was, that in courage and bodily strength he excelled all the warriors of whom mention is any where made, and performed exploits, to which, were they related elsewhere but in the Bible, no one would dream of giving credit.

The first of these was as follows: Having formed an attachment to a woman of Timnath, a town belonging to the Philistines, Samson was on his way to visit her, when a lion rushed out upon him, which he seized, and "rent him," as the Sacred History expresses it, "as he would a kid." He took no notice of the adventure at the time, but passed on, conversed with the damsel, and made arrangements for the wedding; but it happened as he was on his way a second time to fulfil his engagement, that he found a swarm of bees settled in the lion's carcass. He removed the honey, eat a part of it, and gave the remainder to his parents.

It was customary in those days, at marriages and other public festivals, for the host to propose problems

or riddles to his guests, with an understanding that should the mystery be explained, they should receive from him a prize; or else that all, on failing to effect that end, should bestow a like gratuity upon him. Samson at his marriage-feast advanced the following to his Philistine guests, pledging himself that in case they resolved it he would bestow upon them thirty sheets and thirty changes of raiment: "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." For some time they were absolutely puzzled how to resolve the difficulty; but Samson having improvidently informed his bride of its purport, she was easily prevailed upon by her kindred and countrymen to betray the secret. The consequence was that they explained the problem, and Samson became liable to the penalty. But the Nazarite was too indignant at the mode in which his riddle was made plain, to pay the debt by any ordinary means. He went down to Ashkelon, slew thirty Philistines, and with the spoil which he took from them discharged his obligation.

From that day Samson's constant endeavours were directed to work the enemies of his country evil. His bride having deserted him, he caught three hundred foxes, and tying them in couples by the tail, let them loose, with blazing firebrands fastened to them, among the Philistines' corn, and when the Philistines basely put his wife and her father to death, he carried on war openly against them. Now then they took up arms, and moved in force within the province of Judah, which so alarmed the people of that tribe, that they turned in hostility against Samson. The latter, on receiving an assurance that the men of Judah would not themselves fall upon him, readily permitted himself to be bound, in which plight he was led down to the Philistines' camp: but no sooner had the Philistines rushed out to meet him, than he snapped his cords asunder,

and arming himself with the jaw-bone of an ass, which happened to be near, he put to death no fewer than a thousand of them.

That this was altogether the work, not of man, but of God, was soon demonstrated. Samson, wearied with his exertions, became exceedingly faint; and as there was no water in the place, he prayed that a fountain might be opened. His prayer was heard: God caused a stream to rush from a hollow rock hard by, and Samson, in gratitude, gave to it the name of En-hakkor, a word which signifies "the well of him that prayed," and which continued to be the designation of that stream ever after.

Samson now held the Philistines in such contempt, that he went openly into the city of Gaza, for the purpose of visiting there one Delilah, a woman of loose character, for whom he had formed an unhappy predilection. An attempt was indeed made forcibly to detain him here, by closing the gates of the place, and making them fast; but Samson broke away bolts, bars, and hinges, and departed, carrying the gates upon his shoulders to the top of a neighbouring hill. After this his enemies strove to entrap him by guile, rather than by violence, and they were too successful in the end. Having more than once deceived Delilah, he at last, in a moment of weakness, disclosed to her that God had been pleased to connect his extraordinary strength with his hair, insomuch that if the latter were cut off, the former would depart with it. The treacherous woman seized the first opportunity of putting the truth of his declaration to the test. She shaved his head, whilst he lay sleeping in her lap; he was instantly arrested by his enemies, and now, being deserted by God, stood before them as a common man. His punishment was severe; though he amply revenged it, as well as redeemed his own honour, by the manner of his death. The Philistines having

deprived him of sight, kept him, like a wild beast, for mockery and insult; and brought him, on a certain occasion, into a large amphitheatre, where several thousand persons were assembled to celebrate a feast in honour of their god Dagon. By this time Samson's hair had recovered its growth, his strength was restored, and he used it to destroy both himself and his enemies. Having persuaded the boy, who guided his steps, to place him where he could reach two pillars, upon which the roof of the building rested, he tore them down, and the mass falling upon those who sat under it, crushed them to pieces. Among the number of the slain was Samson, who had, indeed, entreated as an act of mercy from God that he might not survive.

There are few matters related in the preceding chapter which appear to us to stand in need of any particular explanation or defence. With respect to the miraculous interference, by which God was pleased, from time to time, to manifest his readiness to forgive his repentant people, and the uniformity of his gracious designs towards mankind at large, no more can be said, than has been said already of other, and equally surprising transactions. The personal feats of Samson, the victories of Gideon, Jephthah and others, were all achieved by that power, which is circumscribed by no laws, and however contrary to the natural order of things some of them may appear, they cannot be rejected, without invalidating the whole testimony of Scripture. It is not so, however, in reference to certain other transactions, whose contrariety to the immutable laws of right, stands conspicuous. The assassination of Eglon, and the murder of Sisera, are both of them deeds, of which no Christian can approve, and which, though they were permitted by Jehovah, and applauded by the people of Israel, we are not justified in supposing that the

Almighty regarded with favour. On the contrary, there cannot be a doubt that here, as in the case of Jacob's treachery, God made guilty persons the instruments by which his ends were attained, exactly as, in our own times, the rebel and the regicide were God's ministers of wrath, to a blinded court and an impious nation. So is it with respect to the intestine feuds, and terrible punishments, inflicted, as well by one party of Israelites upon another, as by the Israelites upon the heathen. These were the offspring, and the necessary offspring of barbarous times, which God could not hinder, without violently counteracting all the operations of the human mind, and as such never has been, and we may well believe, never will be his mode of guiding man to the truth, there is no ground of disbelief, or even of uneasiness, in the most revolting of these histories. So far indeed are such disclosures from invalidating the testimony of Scripture, that they add to it, inasmuch as the inspired writer, by relating the crimes and follies, not less than the virtues and great actions of his countrymen, establishes a claim upon our confidence, which any other line of conduct must have failed to create, because it is perfectly inconceivable that any one, whilst inventing a fiction, would have interspersed it with so many notices, derogatory from the honour of this nation.

Abstaining, therefore, from the discussion of points, which, if we regard them impartially, stand in no need of discussion, we shall content ourselves with the remark, that God does not always select the most perfect moral characters, to be the executioners of his judgments, a truth which is nowhere more distinctly proved, than in the cases of Samson, Ehud, and Jael.

CHAPTER XIV.

Government of the judges continued.—Loss of the ark.—Miraculously restored.—Saul anointed king.—His history and death.

A. M. 4259 to 4341.—B. C. 1152 to 1070.

WHILST Samson was thus exerting his supernatural strength to harass the external enemies of Israel, its internal affairs, as well civil as religious, were administered by Eli, the high-priest. Pious and upright in his own character, Eli appears, nevertheless, to have permitted the grossest abuses to be practised by his sons Hophni and Phinehas, till the people became at last disgusted with the service of God, who in return denounced against them and their governor the heaviest judgments.

One of the most regular attendants upon
 B. C. 1142. the public festivals at this time, was a man named Elkanah, a Levite of the tribe of Ephraim, who had married two wives, one of whom bore him children, whilst the other was barren. The latter, doubly distressed on account of the reproaches of her more fortunate rival, prayed earnestly that God would take away her reproach, and was, on a certain occasion, assured prophetically by the high-priest, who noticed her manner, that the prayer which she had uttered would be heard. In due time a son was born to her. She named him Samuel, in commemoration of the circumstances which preceded his birth, and having devoted him to the service of the taber-

nacle, she brought him up, as soon as he had attained to a proper age, and gave him into the care of Eli.

It happened on a particular night, as the child lay asleep in his bed, that he heard distinctly the voice of some one calling to him by name. As he knew nothing, as yet, of Divine communications, Samuel naturally concluded that he had been summoned by Eli, and running into the high-priest's chamber, declared himself ready to fulfil his wishes. This occurred thrice, till Eli perceived that his young charge had been favoured with a vision, and instructed him how to act. The consequence was, that God rendered Samuel the channel of communication between himself and Eli, by informing him of the evils which would befall the high-priest; and the child, being closely questioned in the morning, concealed nothing from his guardian.

From that hour, Samuel may be said to have entered upon his prophetic career. As he grew towards manhood, God held communications with him more direct and more frequent; and his countrymen seeing this, began to look up to him with peculiar deference and respect. But the deference, which they paid to Samuel, operated not as a corrective of the evil practices into which they had fallen. Punishment alone seems ever to have brought the Hebrews to a sense of their own folly, and a heavy calamity, such as "made both the ears of every one that heard it tingle," soon overtook them.

There was war at this time with the Philistines, and in an action fought near Eben-ezer, the Israelites were defeated with the loss of four thousand men. Irritated rather than disheartened by the defeat, the Israelites again mustered their forces, and attributing to the material ark, that virtue which belonged only to God's favour, obtained by means of their own obedience, they sent to request that it and its at-

tendant priests might come down to the army. The ark was accordingly brought into the camp, Hophni and Phinehas, as in duty bound, accompanying it, and the people, confident that Jehovah would now fight for them in real earnest, advanced boldly to the charge. But the event by no means justified their superstitious expectations. They were totally defeated, thirty thousand men, including the two sons of the high-priest, being slain; and the ark, on whose presence they had counted so fondly, fell into the hands of the Philistines. Such was the commencement of God's threatened punishment upon Eli and his house; but it ended not there. A messenger abruptly communicating to the high-priest the loss which had been sustained, the old man fell backwards from his seat and died, whilst Phinehas's wife, being prematurely taken in labour, lived only till she had brought a son into the world, whom she named I-chabod.

B. C.
1122. In the mean while, the Philistines, elated with their victory, conveyed the ark of God to Ashdod, and placed it in triumph in the temple of their god, Dagon. Their horror, however, was only to be equalled by their astonishment, when, on entering the fane on the following day, they found that the statue of Dagon had fallen flat on the ground, and though they raised him up and planted him once more upon his pedestal, the same thing again occurred during the ensuing night. On this occasion, indeed, the image of Dagon was broken to pieces, and the people of Ashdod became so alarmed, that they caused the fatal ark to be conveyed beyond their walls. It was, in consequence, removed from city to city, till it had made a circuit round the principal settlements of the Philistines, and wherever it came, evil came with it, both upon the people and upon their gods. A severe and loathsome disease

broke out amongst them; swarms of field-mice consumed their corn ere it was cut down, and the hand of Jehovah was seen to lie heavily upon them. It was now that certain of their priests and divines strongly advised them to send away the chest, which they, not unnaturally, regarded as the origin of all their troubles. In consequence of this advice a certain number of golden mice and emerods were deposited in the ark, which was put into a cart, to which a couple of heifers were yoked, whose calves the priests directed their rulers to secure; yet the animals no sooner found themselves at liberty than, setting the instincts of nature at defiance, they proceeded at a quick pace towards Beth-shemesh, within the territories of Israel. Here, upon an extensive plain, in which a number of reapers were employed, they halted. The people flocking round, soon began to exhibit their joy at the occurrence of so propitious and unlooked-for an adventure. The cart being broken up into firewood, the heifers were offered as a sacrifice upon the spot, whilst the Levites, with all solemnity, placed the ark on the top of a huge stone. Unfortunately, however, the men of the place, instigated by curiosity and forgetful of God's prohibition, pressed forward to gaze into the chest, for which offence seventy were struck dead, out of a crowd of upwards of fifty thousand persons.

The effect of this judgment was, to impress the people of Beth-shemesh with an excessive dread of the ark, which was, at their earnest entreaty, removed to Kirjath-jearim. Here it remained for twenty years, during which period the morals of the Israelites underwent a great change, and God became, in consequence, reconciled to his inheritance. Of this, ample proof was given in the victory which he enabled them to obtain over their enemies, the Philistines. The latter advancing to attack an assembly, which had met

for religious purposes at Mizpeh, were thrown into confusion by a storm of thunder and hail, of which the Israelites so promptly availed themselves, as utterly to destroy them. They followed up their first success with great resolution; many cities, which in the course of previous wars had been wrested from them, were recovered, and, throughout the remainder of Samuel's administration, all things, both at home and abroad, went on prosperously.

We have now arrived at a period in sacred history, which has been rendered memorable by the occurrence of a great and important change in the form of the Hebrew government. Up to this moment, the constitution of the Israelites was as favourable to the maintenance of absolute freedom and equality, as any that has ever been invented. Possessing a law upon which no human power was competent to effect the slightest innovation, the people were accustomed to see its enactments carried into force by individuals whose claims to obedience rested entirely upon the rights which patriarchal institutions convey, but who, in the everyday occurrences of life, aimed at no superiority over those whom they justly regarded as brethren. In like manner each tribe, though connected with the rest by the ties of a common origin, and a sense of mutual advantage, exercised, on ordinary occasions, absolute independence within itself; whilst all were united into one state, as often as circumstances required, by a judge, or supreme magistrate, raised up especially for the occasion. That there was less of apparent vigour in these arrangements, than in the monarchical system, cannot perhaps be denied; and, had the Israelites lived like other nations, subject to the influence of ordinary contingencies, the change might, in some respects at least, be pronounced for the better. But the Israelites never lived as other men did, subject to the influence of ordinary contingencies and accidents:

their government was, from first to last, a theocracy, Jehovah himself being their temporal prince, as he was their great lawgiver; and hence there cannot be a doubt that, among them, the patriarchal model would have served all the purposes of an executive, had they paid to God's laws an undeviating obedience. To greatness, perhaps, in the common sense of the term, they never would have arisen; because, theirs were arrangements adapted less for war and conquest, than for peace; but they would have retained, to the end of their national existence, that which is infinitely more desirable than greatness—a large share of personal liberty, with an adequate supply of the means of subsistence.

We read, in the eighth chapter of the first B. C. Book of Samuel, that as the prophet and 1110. judge became stricken in years, he devolved a portion of his authority upon his sons, who, like the sons of Eli, were far from walking in the same path of rigid probity which had been pursued by their father. The consequence was, the Israelites became disgusted with the judicial form of government, and, alarmed, at the same time, by a threatened invasion of the Ammonites, they came, in a tumultuous manner, to Samuel, and required that he would give them a king. Samuel was greatly shocked at the demand, and, reminding them that they had already a king in Jehovah, he set before them a vivid picture of the evils which the elevation of a temporal prince would bring upon them. But his remonstrances were unheeded; and, as God directed him to yield to their wishes, his attention was thenceforth turned to the selection of a proper person to fill the throne. Here, however, no right of choice was left to the people. As Israel was God's nation, and the king, when appointed, would fill no higher rank than that of vicegerent, or representative of the Divine Majesty, God exercised his unquestion-

able right of nominating his own deputy, and, by a series of remarkable interferences, caused the lot to determine in favour of Saul, the son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin. That individual, who was distinguished throughout the congregation for his size and great beauty, was accordingly crowned with becoming pomp; and, though there were not wanting some ambitious persons, who affected to hold his origin in contempt, he seems, nevertheless, to have been well received by the nation at large.

Saul's first exploits, after his accession to the throne, were well calculated to reconcile to him the good-will of all his subjects. Marching rapidly to the relief of Jabesh-gilead, then closely besieged by Nahash, King of the Ammonites, he attacked the enemy in three quarters of their camp, and totally defeated them, with immense slaughter. Nor was his clemency less conspicuous than his valour. When his adherents, in the heat of triumph, would have taken vengeance on the persons who had presumed, on his first election, to speak of their sovereign in terms of disrespect, Saul would, on no account, sanction the measure, declaring that not a man should be put to death, "for to-day the Lord hath wrought salvation in Israel."

For some time Saul appears to have conducted himself as a faithful representative of the Most High, administering justice according to the law of Moses, and supporting, in purity, the true religion; but either pride began, at last, to gain the mastery over him, or prosperity produced in him a result similar to that which it was accustomed to produce among the people at large. The first act on record, in which his disregard of the divine will is shown, was as follows: The Philistines making a sudden inroad, he marched out to oppose them, at the head of three thousand of his guards, directing the militia to assemble at Gilgal, where, within seven days, Samuel promised to meet

him ; but as the prophet delayed his coming, both Saul and his followers experienced the liveliest apprehensions for their personal safety. Under these circumstances, Saul “ forced himself,” and offered a sacrifice to God ; thus offending, as well against the law, as against religion ; against religion, by performing a devotional ceremony in an improper frame of mind, and against the law, by assuming to himself the priestly office. The sacrifice was scarcely finished, ere Samuel arrived, to rebuke his sovereign for his profaneness, and to assure him, that unless he took good heed to his future proceedings, Jehovah would withdraw from him the honours with which he was invested. Nevertheless, God did not punish him at the moment, even by the loss of a battle ; on the contrary, a great victory graced the arms of Israel on that day, in securing which the chief merit rested with Saul’s son, Jonathan, one of the most chivalrous, as well as amiable characters in all history.

B. C. Sometime after this, when the domestic, as well
1108. as public affairs of the Hebrew monarch were in the most flourishing condition, he received instructions from Samuel to undertake an expedition against the Amalekites. By the tenour of that commission, he was bound to spare neither man nor beast, to make no captives, nor carry off any plunder, but “ to slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.” Saul accordingly took the field at the head of a numerous and well-appointed army ; success attended him in every undertaking ; he completely subdued the country of the Amalekites, and took their king prisoner ; but against the whispers and allurements of vanity and avarice, the victorious warrior appears to have been incapable of holding out. He spared the life of Agag, that the unfortunate prince might grace his triumph, and “ of the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and of the

lambs, and all that was good." It needed but some such act as this, to complete the measure of his iniquities. God sent Samuel to assure him, that as he had presumed to disobey the divine command, so had Jehovah rejected him from being king over Israel; and though the prophet would not so far disgrace him in the eyes of his troops, as to leave him, without performing one act of worship, he nevertheless ceased, from that time forth, to hold any communication with him. After causing Agag to be brought forth, and slaying him with his own hand, he returned to his house at Ramah, and dwelt there.

In the mean while, God having selected David, the great-grandson of Boaz and Ruth, as a fit person to fill the throne of his kingdom, sent Samuel to Bethlehem, with orders to anoint him, as the head of a new dynasty. The deed was done under very striking circumstances, David being called from "keeping sheep," for that purpose; but as it entered not into the Divine councils to remove the crown from Saul by violence, David made no movement during that monarch's life, to assert his rights. It is far from clear, indeed, whether the object of his unction was known, at least for a time, to any other persons besides Samuel and himself; for we find him soon afterwards removed into the family of Saul, that he might sooth, by the power of his minstrelsy, a frenzy with which the latter was afflicted. But his stay there appears not to have been very protracted. The king's malady was no sooner removed, than David returned to his father's house, where, though dignified with the honorary distinction of a royal armour-bearer, he seems to have been speedily forgotten.

It happened soon after this, that the Philistines, recovering from their losses, renewed the war against Israel, and marched with a prodigious army towards Shochoh. Here they took

up a position in a valley, between Shochoh and Azekah, whilst Saul, who moved promptly to oppose them, posted himself on the high grounds above Elah. Whilst the two armies lay here in presence one of the other, there advanced a gigantic champion from the lines of the Philistines, who defied to single combat the bravest of Saul's soldiers. So prodigious, however, was his stature, and so fierce his aspect, that no man would accept the challenge, though the king, by public proclamation, promised the hand of his eldest daughter in marriage, with an ample dowry, to any bold adventurer who should slay the Philistine. Still all shrank back from the trial; and, day after day, Goliath of Gath defied the armies of Israel with impunity.

Things were in this state, when David arrived in camp, as the bearer of certain articles of provisions to his brothers, who served under Saul. Indignant at the insolence of the Philistine, and eager to wipe out the disgrace which attached to his country, David bravely offered to accept his challenge; and, though treated with contempt by his brothers, he persisted in his determination, which was forthwith communicated to Saul. The king sent for him, and a conversation ensued, honourable, in the highest degree, to both parties. Though anxious to see the pride of his enemy humbled, Saul could not but remonstrate with David on the rashness of his attempt; but the latter reminding him that God does not always give the battle to the strong, declared himself resolute to achieve the adventure. The result was, that David, after vainly endeavouring to incase himself in the king's armour, went forth against the Philistine, armed merely with his sling; and casting a stone with great force and precision, drove it deep into the giant's brain. The monster fell lifeless to the earth; and the young shepherd, rushing forward, drew forth his own sword from the scabbard, and cut off his head. There was an

immediate route in the ranks of the Philistines. Their champion being slain, they no longer dared to keep the field, but fled in total disorder, closely pursued by the Israelites, who committed immense havoc among them.

Had Saul been actuated by the feelings of an honourable mind, he would have instantly conferred upon David the promised reward, and, advancing him to the highest dignities in his court and army, would have kept him about his person; but Saul's proceedings were of a widely different nature. Envious of the Beth-lehemite's renown, he looked at him with an evil eye; and though he could not absolutely refuse to promote him, he deprived him of his bride, by giving her in marriage to another. It was under these circumstances that a romantic friendship between David and Jonathan began. The latter, grieved at the misconduct of his father, embraced every opportunity of proving, that to the motives which prompted it, he was a stranger; and the two young men clung to one another, thenceforth, with more than fraternal fondness. It is not improbable, that the generous behaviour of his son produced some effect, even upon Saul: for though he had denied to David the hand of his eldest daughter, he offered no objection to the attachment, which soon arose towards the gallant youth, in the breast of her sister. He required,

B. C. 1075. indeed, as the condition of this union, that David should bring him irrefragable proofs of having slain a hundred Philistines; a stipulation, which was doubtless advanced under the idea that David might perish in attempting to fulfil it; but when the latter satisfied him that double the number had fallen, he did not withdraw from his pledge. David and Michal were accordingly married; and Jonathan and his friend became brothers, by consanguinity, as well as affection.

B. C.
1074. From this time forth the behaviour of Saul to David resembled that of an insane person rather than a tyrant. Whether it was that the ceremony of his son-in-law's unction was now known to him, or whether he suspected, from other circumstances, that God had chosen him to be his successor, we are not informed; but, under the pretence of an apprehended rebellion, he twice attempted the life of David, by striking at him with his javelin. Assassins, likewise, were commissioned to put him to death; till at last the son of Jesse was compelled to flee from the court, and seek refuge at Ramah. There was here a college, or academy, for the instruction of young men designed for the prophetic office, at the head of which was Samuel, now in the extremity of old age; and David, seeking shelter within its precincts, the spirit of God fell upon him. Nor was the effect different when Saul, full of wrath, pursued him to his sacred retreat. He no sooner entered beneath the portals of Naioth, than the spirit of God came likewise upon him, and to the astonishment of all who witnessed the phenomenon, he openly prophesied.

Encouraged by this circumstance, and hoping that his sovereign's fury might have subsided, David ventured once more to approach the court, when a secret interview between him and Jonathan took place. The young men solemnly renewed their league of affection in terms that no person, possessed of ordinary taste, can peruse without emotion; and it was agreed between them that Jonathan should carefully watch over the safety of his friend, and give him constant information touching Saul's designs. Unhappily, however, these continued as hostile as ever. Nothing could soften the groundless hostility which had entered into the bosom of the tyrant; and David, to avoid its consequences, became a fugitive and an outlaw.

The risks and hazards which David ran were,

B. C. 1071. from this time forward, of no common character. Hunted from place to place, like a wild beast, and compelled to find subsistence as he could, he contrived nevertheless to gather about him some hundreds of daring young men, whom he employed in predatory excursions against the enemies of his country, as well as in guarding his own person. The consequence was, that though there were multitudes ready to betray him, friends were not wanting to supply his necessities; amongst whom, Ahimelech, the high-priest, to his own and to his family's ruin, was one; whilst he laid the foundation of a force which, in aftertimes, stood him in good stead. But he was also sorely pressed on more than one occasion. Once he was driven to preserve his life by counterfeiting madness, amongst the Philistines at Gath; at another time he was fain to seek protection from the King of Moab; and on a third occasion it was only by a timely evacuation of the town of Keilah, which he had just relieved from a besieging army of Philistines, that he escaped being basely delivered into the hands of Saul. Yet was David's behaviour to his ruthless pursuer marked by the most praiseworthy generosity. Twice he spared his life, when fortune had placed it at his disposal, and when his followers strongly urged upon him the necessity of freeing his country, as well as himself, from oppression, he made no hesitation, even at such a moment, in pledging himself to treat with kindness Saul's posterity. But acts of generosity were thrown away upon Saul. Reckless of consequences, from a conviction that God had deserted him, the tyrant rushed from one crime to another, till the land was defiled with his iniquities, and the cup of God's wrath became full.

Such was the state of public affairs, when Samuel the prophet died, and was buried with all the marks of public respect and sorrow to which his many

excellencies entitled him. Though no communication had for some time passed between the prophet and the king, it would appear that the latter, as long as Samuel lived, clung to the hope that their intercourse might yet be renewed; at least we find him, after the prophet's death, acting in such a manner as cannot, upon any other principle, be explained. During the first years of his reign Saul had exhibited great zeal in eradicating from Israel all wizards and magicians, as well real as pretended: now, however, that he stood alone, unsupported by any prophet of God, and unaided by advice from on high, the king, with desperate wickedness, resolved to consult the powers of darkness; and as there chanced to be yet one person left who professed to deal in the forbidden art, to her he made a private journey as far as En-dor. The design which he had in view on that occasion is a remarkable one. An army of Philistines had again invaded his country, and there was no person left alive from whom he could inquire as to God's designs respecting him; for, among other acts of tyranny, he had put to death the high-priest Ahimelech, and driven his successor to the necessity of seeking protection from David: Saul, therefore, determined to bring the soul of Samuel from its place of rest, that he might learn from it the fate which awaited him; and as he appears to have entertained extravagant notions of the influence of spells and incantations, he experienced no doubt that the witch of En-dor would be able to gratify his desire.

B. C.
1070. Who the witch of En-dor was—whether she really held communication with the spirits of darkness, or was enabled, by superior craft, to deceive the people, it is not very easy to determine; but in her supernatural powers Saul manifestly believed, and the event was undeniably such as we possess no means, on what are termed natural principles,

to explain. Having reached the woman's dwelling in disguise, and opened to her his wishes, she readily consented to gratify them, provided he would assure her of escaping the vengeance of the king, the well-known enemy of necromancers; and, on his giving a pledge to that effect, she proceeded with her incantations, of the routine of which, however, no account is given. It is more than probable that the witch of En-dor, like the magicians of Egypt, was a mere pretender to occult science, though of the interference of evil spirits in the affairs of men, during these early ages, we possess too many proofs, both in sacred and profane history, to doubt;—but, however this may be, Saul himself was not more horrified, when there suddenly stood before them a shadowy being, bearing the resemblance, which Samuel bore whilst alive, and arrayed in the garments, which he had been accustomed to wear, than was the woman, at whose summons it appeared. She shrieked aloud in dismay, whilst Saul, bending his head towards the earth, listened to a doom of fearful import. “The Lord hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand,” said the vision, “and given it to thy neighbour, even to David. Moreover, the Lord will also deliver Israel with thee, into the hand of the Philistines: and to-morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me: the Lord also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines.” Saul heard no more. His limbs refused to do their office, his sinews were unstrung, and he fell like one smitten with a mortal wound, to the earth; nor was it without urgent importunity, on the part both of the woman and his servants, that he was at length prevailed upon to strengthen himself, by taking food, against the perils of the morrow.

Whilst Saul was thus conducting himself, David, driven from place to place, had been rudely treated by an individual, called Nabal, whom, but for the prudence of his wife, he would have destroyed; and was

at last compelled to seek shelter amongst the Philistines, an alternative which he did not adopt without extreme regret. There, in the town of Ziklag, he established himself, and as king Achish, in whose dominions the place lay, was aware of the quarrel between Saul and his guest, he treated the latter with great distinction. David, however, was no traitor. Though he pretended an extreme desire of leading the van in the army, with which Achish was preparing to invade Israel, he, nevertheless, so contrived matters, as to excite the jealousy of the Philistine chiefs, to gratify whom the King of Gath ordered him to the rear, and forbade his taking part in the campaign. David affected excessive mortification at this, and remonstrated against the arrangement, but the king was resolute, so he returned to carry on war with increased numbers against the Amalekites, whom he defeated in numerous encounters.

In the mean while the armies of Saul and of the Philistines came into presence, and a furious battle was fought. Nothing daunted by the denunciations of the preceding night, Saul bore himself bravely in the struggle, both as general and a warrior; but the hand of destiny was upon him, and his exertions proved of no avail. Outnumbered and broken, the Israelites gave way in all directions. It was in vain that Saul and his sons, more especially Jonathan, the bravest of the brave, strove to rally them. Their example and entreaties were alike thrown away, and the rout became complete from one end of the line to the other. Then it was that Jonathan, charging in the thickest of the fray, met the death which had been denounced against him. A similar fate befell two of his brothers; whilst their father, weak with watching, and enfeebled by wounds, found himself alike unable to escape and to maintain the combat. In this emergency, with the prospect of capture and disgrace be-

fore him, he came to the desperate resolution of perishing by his own hand, and, falling upon his sword, he gave to the prediction of the vision a terrible accomplishment.

The bodies of Saul and his sons were recognised by the Philistines on the field, and these barbarians proceeded to heap upon them indignities of which they could feel nothing. They cut off their heads, sent expresses every where to announce their triumph, and stripping them of their armour, offered it as an acceptable oblation in the temple of Ashtarothe. The heads, again, of the Hebrew princes were set up upon Dagon's temple, as their carcasses were gibbeted over the walls of Bethshan, where they hung till the men of Jabesh-gilead, with commendable piety, stole them by night, and honoured them with rites of sepulture. Thus perished Saul, one of the most extraordinary characters in Sacred History, and thus was the dynasty which first arose in Israel extinguished in a single reign.

There are very few facts recorded in the portion of Scripture, of which the preceding pages contain an abridgment, which appear to us to stand in need either of explanation or defence. No man who understands, in any degree, the nature of the Hebrew constitution, or entertains just notions of God's designs in all his dealings with that strange people, will experience the smallest surprise at the charge of guilt brought against them in consequence of their demand of a king. From the mode of expression employed by their speakers it is very evident that the Israelites aimed, on that occasion, at an absolute emancipation from Divine control; that of the theocracy under which they had hitherto lived, they were weary, and that they desired to be "like other nations," freed from the restraints of an especial Providence. Hence, and not from any indisposition to sanction an arrangement for which,

indeed the law had provided, proceeded that remarkable declaration of Jehovah, when desiring Samuel to comply with their wishes, he adds, "they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them;" and hence also the behaviour of Samuel in bringing upon them the judgment of a thunderstorm, at a season when, above all others, its occurrence was most to be deprecated. But as they appear to have been cured of their folly, almost as soon as they fell into it, we read of no lasting punishments inflicted upon them till Saul, by his disregard of the will of his Divine Master, drew the nation into sin, as sin led the way to suffering. The desire, therefore, of the Hebrews to have their laws administered by one man, in whose family the chief executive power should be hereditary, was not sinful;—it was the impious and weak inclination to be in all respects as the other nations, which alone gave offence to the Most High.

But it may be asked, was not the theocracy, in the proper sense of that term, necessarily abrogated, on the elevation of an individual to supreme power, and the substitution of an hereditary for an elective sovereignty? We have no hesitation in giving to this question an answer decidedly in the negative. Under their kings, as under their judges, the Israelites were still, strictly, the inheritance of Jehovah, at least till some time after the return from their Babylonish captivity, as the following abstract from Bishop Warburton's reasoning appears to us distinctly to prove.

That illustrious prelate observes, 1st: "Though the peoples' purpose in their clamours for a king was indeed to live under a gentile monarchy, like their idolatrous neighbours, yet in compassion to their blindness, God in this, as in many other instances, indulged their prejudices, without exposing them to the fatal consequences of their project, which, if com-

plied with in the sense in which they had formed it, would have been a withdrawing from them of his extraordinary providence, at a time when they could not support themselves without it : he therefore gave them a king, but such a one as was only his viceroy or deputy, and who, on that account, was not left to the peoples' election, but chosen by himself, and chosen for life, which it does not appear that all the judges were."

2d: "This king had an unlimited executive power, as God's viceroy must needs have, and it is to be noticed, that for its exercise he was amenable, not to the people but to Jehovah, whom David, in consequence, calls *his own king*, as well as the King of Israel."

3d: "He had no legislative authority, which every king then had, but which no viceroy could have. David and Solomon, indeed, appointed the courses of the priests, but the latter is said to have done so according to the order of the former, who is expressly styled the 'man of God,' who therefore acted under the direction of the Holy Spirit."

4th: "The king was placed and displaced by God at pleasure, of which, as viceroy, we see the perfect fitness, but as sovereign by the people's choice, or by any other right, we cannot easily account for. No doubt God is, by inherent right, the sovereign disposer of all things, both in heaven and on earth ; but in the establishing of the government of Israel, he appears to have treated with that people as men, equally independent, treat with each other, and to have left it at first to their own option, whether they would have *himself* for their king."

5th: "The very same punishment was ordained for cursing the king as for blaspheming God, namely, stoning to death ; and the reason is intimated in these words of Abishai to David, 'Shall not Shimei be

put to death for this, because he cursed the Lord's anointed?" the common title of the kings of Judah and Israel."

6th: "The throne and kingdom of Judea is all along expressly declared to be God's throne and God's kingdom. Thus, in the first Book of Chronicles it is said, that 'Solomon sat *on the throne of the Lord as king*, instead of David, his father.' And the Queen of Sheba, who had doubtless been informed by Solomon of the true nature of his kingdom, compliments him in these words: 'Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighted in thee, and set thee *on his throne, to be king for the Lord thy God*.' In like manner, Ahissah says to the house of Israel, on their defection from Rehoboam, 'and now ye think to withdraw *the kingdom of the Lord* in the hands of the sons of David.'

7th: "The penal laws against idolatry were still in force during their kings, and put in execution by their best rulers, which alone is a demonstration of the subsistence of the theocracy, because such laws would be unjust under any other form of government."

8th: "It appears that a certain degree of inspiration was vouchsafed to their several kings, or at least to the first of each dynasty of kings, to enable them to discharge properly the duties of God's vicegerents, and that this gift was not withdrawn till they were rejected from their high office, or had rendered themselves unworthy of it. Thus, when Saul was appointed to be 'captain over the Lord's inheritance, as soon as he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart, and turned him into a new man,' to qualify him for the government of his people; but when he had rendered himself, by his rebellions against his Divine Sovereign, unworthy of the office, that spirit was withdrawn from him, and

conferred on David, who was anointed to succeed him. In like manner, when Solomon succeeded to the kingdom, God bestowed on him 'a wise and understanding heart, to enable him to govern and judge the people,' who are expressly styled, not Solomon's, but God's people."

It will be seen that Bishop Warburton argues for the necessity of a continuance of the theocracy, on the ground that without the protection of an extraordinary Providence, the Hebrews could not have maintained themselves against the numerous and exasperated enemies, by whom they were surrounded. This is strictly true; yet it is of still greater importance to consider the equal and extraordinary Providence as necessary at that period, and long afterwards, in order to check the propensities of a wayward race to idolatry, and to prepare them gradually for the reception of the Messiah, in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed. A long succession of prophets was accordingly sent, at the head of whom stands Samuel, to pave the way for that dispensation which Moses had taught them to expect; and to remove, by little and little, the shadows of the law, as the people became more and more able to bear the light. The full splendour of that light, however, the nation at large was never able to bear; and hence the extraordinary Providence was never withdrawn from them till some time after their return from the Babylonish captivity, by which they appear to have been completely cured of their disposition to idolatry, and led to turn their attention more steadily to the investigation of revealed truth.

To the very last, however, the theocracy may be said, in a certain sense, to have existed. Whilst captives of the kings of Babylon, the Jews still lived in obedience to those laws which, as they emanated from God, could not, except by God, be repealed.

After their establishment of their independence, too, the same code was rigidly obeyed ; nor was it until our Saviour Christ set up a new and spiritual kingdom, to be governed by a new and spiritual law, that the law originally delivered from Mount Sinai ceased to be binding.

Having noticed this, which is by far the most important point involved in the preceding details, we deem it unnecessary to distract the reader's attention, by bringing into view lesser difficulties, merely that they may be overthrown. That many matters stand on record which deserve credit only in consequence of their place in Holy Writ, is indisputable ; and that various actions are recorded, even of the most upright characters introduced, to which our more correct notions of right and wrong are not easily reconciled, no one will deny. But if it be borne in mind that the portion of history before us treats of barbarous times, and of a people which lived under circumstances in every respect without parallel, these will not be likely to affect the ingenuous reader with the smallest uneasiness. One fact alone may seem to demand a little more notice than has been already bestowed upon it ; we allude to the appearance of Samuel's ghost before Saul at the bidding of the witch of En-dor.

There is nothing which we profess ourselves less willing to admit, than that there ever existed such necromancers or magicians, as those of which the fables of the dark ages make mention. That the spirits of darkness were permitted, in early times, to exercise greater power over the bodies and minds of men than they exercise now, cannot, we think, be denied by any unprejudiced inquirer ; whilst the Bible unquestionably makes mention of more than one occurrence in which an evil spirit has been an agent. But of the power of particular persons to summon

such spirits to their aid, and by means of them to perform miracles, we can discover no evidence in any history, sacred or profane. With respect to the witch of En-dor, again, we have already given it as our opinion, that she belonged to the same class of impostors in which the magicians, who strove against Moses, deserve to be numbered ; in other words, that she was an artful woman, who, by the application of ventriloquism and phantasmagoria, deceived the unwary, and led them into idolatry. The whole story, indeed, of Samuel's reappearance, distinctly proves, that the witch, whilst performing her mummeries, anticipated no such conclusion to them ; for had she really possessed the power of calling the dead from their graves, it is inconceivable that she should have manifested the excessive terror into which the vision of Samuel threw her. It appears, therefore, to us, that God, for a wise purpose, permitted the ghost of Samuel to revisit the earth ; but that, in effecting that extraordinary end, the woman's incantations had no share. If it be further urged that the tale is altogether so wonderful as to be beyond belief, we are compelled to admit that we ourselves believe it only because it is narrated in the Bible.

CHAPTER XV.

David's wanderings.—He mounts the throne.—His errors.—His family disasters.—Rebellion of Absalom.—Is suppressed.—David restored.—Objections answered.

A. M. 4341 to 4375.—B. C. 1070 to 1036.

WHILST Saul was thus fulfilling the destiny which God had appointed him, David, at the head of a bold and daily increasing band, carried on a desultory and successful war against the heathen nations around him. It happened, that during his sojourn in king Achish's camp, the Amalekites, in revenge for numerous inroads on his part, made an expedition against Ziklag, and coming upon it when deserted by its garrison, made themselves masters of the place. No lives appear to have been lost upon that occasion, for the invaders were more eager to secure plunder than revenge; but they burned the town to the ground, carried off the women and children, cattle and goods, and began a disorderly, because a triumphant, march back into their own country. Their triumph, however, was of short continuance. David, informed of what had happened, commenced a rapid pursuit, and overtook the marauders in the desert. There he attacked them, when in a state of absolute confusion, put them totally to the rout, and not only recovered all the property which had originally belonged to his followers, but obtained an immense spoil, which they had collected from different points in the land of the Philistines.

David had returned from this successful expedition but two days, when an Amalekite arrived in Ziklag with intelligence of the defeat of the Israelite army, and the death of Saul and his sons. The man communicated the above information with great apparent satisfaction, under the idea that it would be received with a similar feeling; indeed, he went so far as to arrogate to himself the honour of having slain Saul with his own hand, and produced the monarch's crown and bracelet, in testimony of the truth of his story. But he was deceived in the character of the individual to whom he addressed himself. Instead of rewarding, David upbraided him with his treachery, and ordering his guards to fall upon him, he put him to death on the spot.

The throne was now empty, and David remembering the purpose for which he had been solemnly set aside by Samuel, considered that the moment had at length arrived when it behoved him to accomplish it. He accordingly consulted Jehovah as to the propriety of the measure, and obtaining a favourable answer, set out with his family and followers for Hebron. Here he was well received by the heads of the tribe of Judah, who immediately acknowledged him as king; but the example was not followed, on the instant, by the rest of Israel; on the contrary, Ish-bosheth, the son of Saul, had already mounted the throne, chiefly through the influence of Abner, the late king's uncle, and that prince fixing his residence at Mahanaim, Israel became divided, for a time, into two sovereignties.

It was not to be supposed, that between persons so circumstanced, peace would long be preserved. For a year or two, indeed, a sort of armed truce continued; each party regarding the other with suspicious jealousy; but matters came gradually to a crisis, which was hastened by the following occurrence: Abner, the general of Ish-bosheth's army, and Joab, the leader of

David's, had drawn their forces to a head near the pool of Gibeon, when the former proposed that twelve champions from each side should engage in the warlike pastime of fencing. The challenge was accepted by Joab; and the young men, converting a sport into a serious reality, fell by one another's hands. This brought on a battle, which ended in the defeat of Abner, with some loss: but Asahel, Joab's brother, falling in the pursuit, the fugitives were enabled to make good their retreat in order.

The war thus begun, raged, during several years, with great violence, David's party gaining strength every day, as that of Ish-bosheth's declined; till at last the son of Saul, by an imprudent quarrel with Abner, deprived himself of his only chance of success. Abner, it appears, on the death of Saul, had taken one of his master's concubines to wife; and Ish-bosheth, more mindful of the empty dignity of the crown, than of the important services of his general, reproved the latter in no measured terms, for his presumption. This was more than the pride of a man, conscious of his own merits, and of his master's weakness, could endure. Abner instantly renounced his allegiance to Ish-bosheth, opened a communication with David, and easily persuaded the heads of Israel to follow his example. But he was poorly requited for such services. Joab, alarmed lest he might come between himself and the favour of his sovereign, enticed him into his power; and though covered by the sanctity of a safeconduct from David, treacherously slew him.

David was highly indignant at the bloody deed; but so great was Joab's influence with the army, and so insecure his own condition, that he felt himself precluded from taking the notice of it, which it deserved. He contented himself, therefore, with openly expressing his abhorrence of the murder; and causing a public funeral to be bestowed upon Abner, he him-

self attended as chief mourner. Nor were his apprehensions of the consequences likely to arise, either trifling or ill-founded. Had Ish-bosheth possessed the talents of his father, there cannot be a doubt that he might have turned the affair to good account; for the chiefs of Israel were naturally inflamed into fury, not less than apprehensive, each on his own account; but Ish-bosheth was a weak prince, incapable of availing himself of the opportunity, or, indeed, of supporting the dignity of his situation, now that Abner was taken away from him. The result was, that a conspiracy was entered into against his life, which two of his attendants, Rechab, and Baanah, carried into execution. They attacked him, whilst asleep in the heat of the day, cut off his head, and carried it to David, who bestowed upon them the same reward, which he had previously bestowed upon the lying Amalekite.

B. C. 1063. The death of Ish-bosheth having removed every obstacle to David's succession, he was acknowledged as king by all the tribes of Israel. The first use which he made of power, was to march with a numerous army against Jerusalem; the fort or citadel of which, situated on Mount Sion, had continued, from the days of Joshua, in the hands of the Jebusites; and having taken it by assault, in which Joab eminently distinguished himself, he established there the seat of his government. A handsome and costly palace was accordingly built, the bounds of the city were enclosed on every side, and Jerusalem became from thenceforth, the capital of the Hebrew empire. Here David dwelt for some time in peace and great prosperity, in the midst of a multitude of wives, of a numerous offspring, and of faithful and obsequious servants.

B. C. 1061. But the life of David, whether as a sovereign or a private person, was not destined to be one of repose. His architectural labours were

scarcely completed, when a violent inroad of the Philistines summoned him to the field, where fresh victories, the indications of God's power, awaited him. Twice he overthrew their armies in battle, on the plain of Rephaim, after which he carried the war into their country with distinguished success; and then returning to Jerusalem, he resumed the occupations from which their hostile movements had withdrawn him.

One of the first acts of the Hebrew monarch
B. C. on the close of the war, was to bring up the
1060. ark with great pomp and ceremony from Kirjath-jearim to the capital. He was attended on this occasion by a corps of thirty thousand men, partly, perhaps, for the sake of doing honour to the procession, but not less in order that all hazard of interruption from the Philistines might be averted; and the ark being placed on a new cart, the whole set forward. Bands of music went before, and the shouts of multitudes rent the air, when an event befell, which, in a moment, converted the joy of David and his company into horror. By some accident or another the ark lost its equilibrium, and Uzzah, one of the drivers, fearful lest it might fall, stretched out his hand to support it. As Uzzah belonged not to the privileged class, to whom alone it was allowed to touch that sacred coffer, he was instantly struck dead for his presumption; * and so great was the effect produced upon all those who witnessed the occurrence, that David became afraid to proceed further in his project. The ark was accordingly arrested in its progress, at

* An objection has been taken to this occurrence, as if the sudden death of Uzzah, on so trivial an occasion, were opposed to all our notions of God's justice and goodness, more especially as the error into which he fell seems to have been involuntary. To this it is sufficient to reply, that some such example as the catastrophe in question afforded, was requisite, in order to bring back the Israelites generally to a due reverence for the ark, in which, since it fell into the hands of the Philistines, they seem to

the dwelling of a Levite, whose name was Obed-edom, where for some time it remained, till the king, recovering from his panic, once more made an effort to remove it to Jerusalem. On this occasion, no cause of drawback to the general rejoicing appeared. Numerous and sumptuous offerings greeted it as it passed; bands of minstrels, with David at their head, went before; and finally it was lodged in a tabernacle, which the king had prepared for it, within the precincts of Mount Sion. But even now David's triumph received a check from a quarter whence it ought, least of all, to have issued. His wife Michal, Saul's daughter, who had been separated from him for a season, and whom he recovered only when he ascended the throne, affected to treat him with contempt, because he had danced and sung songs of triumph before the ark; and David withdrew himself, in consequence, altogether from her society.

B. C.
1055. The ark being thus lodged in Jerusalem, and a gorgeous palace built for himself, David next meditated the erection of a temple, in which the hallowed chest might be deposited, with greater splendour than now surrounded it. He had proceeded so far in this design as to dedicate a large quantity of gold and silver to the undertaking; and to procure a fresh supply of cedar-wood from his ally, Hiram, King of Tyre, when it was announced by Nathan, the prophet or seer, that for him the honour of such a building was not reserved, but that his son should more than execute the plan which he had devised.

have been wanting. That the case was so, David's exhortation to Zadok and Abiathar, on an after occasion, distinctly proves. "Ye are the chief of the fathers of the Levites," says he, "sanctify yourselves, therefore, both ye and your brethren, that you may bring up the ark of the Lord God of Israel, to the place that I have prepared for it; *because ye did it not at the first*, the Lord our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not, after the due order."

Assurances were moreover given, that in the event of their paying constant obedience to the Divine laws, his posterity should, throughout many generations, occupy the throne of Israel; whilst the promise, first granted to Adam in Paradise, and afterwards repeated in succession to the patriarchs, was renewed, though in obscure terms, to him. For all these acts of mercy David was exceedingly thankful, and he expressed his gratitude, as he was accustomed to do, in a hymn of striking beauty.

From that time David gave himself, during many years, to the prosecution of wars and conquests. Not only were the Philistines subdued, and Gath, their chief city, taken, but Moab, the Syrians of Zobah, the Syrians of Damascus, the Ammonites, the Amalekites, and the Edomites, all felt the weight of his arm, till the bounds of the kingdom of Israel may be said to have extended over the whole space originally promised to Abraham. This done, David returned, loaded with spoils, to Jerusalem, and piously dedicated the precious metals which he had taken to the service of the tabernacle.

David's greatness was now at its height. Victorious abroad, and the sovereign of a united and prosperous empire at home, he conducted himself with strict attention to the laws of Jehovah, by placing fit persons over each department in the state, and by regulating his domestic habits according to the dictates of piety and honour. In particular, he faithfully fulfilled his promises to Saul and to Jonathan, by granting to Mephibosheth, the son of the latter, all the lands held by his grandfather, and by treating with marked kindness even Ziba, because he had been a faithful servant to his master. It would have been well for him, had he possessed the same control over his own passions, which he was in the habit of exercising over the passions of others.

Things were in this state, when Nahash, King of the Ammonites, from whom David had, in former times, received hospitality, died, and was succeeded by his son, Hanun. To this prince the Hebrew monarch sent ambassadors, to congratulate him on his accession to the throne, and to renew the league of amity, which had subsisted between Nahash and himself. But the young king, listening to the advice of evil counsellors, put upon the Hebrew envoys the most grievous insults, which it was possible to bestow. He caused their beards to be shaved on one side of the face, their garments to be cut short by the middle, and in this plight dismissed them. David's indignation was violently and justly roused. He ordered Joab to march at the head of a great army, for the purpose of vindicating the honour of his crown; and that warrior, finding nothing to oppose him by the way, proceeded rapidly to Rabbah. Here he encountered a considerable body of Syrians, with whom the Ammonites had formed an alliance, drawn up in the open country, whilst the Ammonites, who esteemed themselves less expert in warlike operations, held the strong ground about the town; but Joab made such a disposition of his forces, as to engage both divisions at the same moment. A great and decisive victory crowned his efforts, but the season of the year being too far advanced to authorize the commencement of a siege, he contented himself with chasing the fugitives within the walls, and returned home.

In the mean while David had conducted the war in person, with his usual vigour against Hadarezer, the Syrian monarch. Having come up with his main army at Helam, he defeated it with prodigious slaughter, slaying the general Shobach, and destroying both his cavalry and chariots, which so alarmed the petty princes, who acknowledged Hadarezer, as their feudal superior, that one and all hastened to make their peace

with the conqueror. Finally, Hadarezer himself, sued for pardon, and the Ammonites, deserted by their allies, stood alone to abide the shock of David's fury. Nor was it long before the storm burst upon them. In the early part of spring, as soon as it was practicable to take the field, David again despatched Joab against Rabbah, who after laying waste the open country, and possessing himself of numerous outposts, closely invested the place.

Such was the condition of public affairs, when
B. C. 1052. David, who had not accompanied the army, beheld, one evening, from the top of his house, a beautiful woman in the bath. He instantly conceived for her a violent attachment, and though he learned that she was the wife of a brave and faithful soldier, his passion so completely overcame his reason, that he scrupled not to set all moral and religious obligations at defiance. The consequences were fatal both to himself and others. After several fruitless efforts to save Bath-sheba's reputation, the king formed the desperate resolution of ordering Joab to expose her husband Uriah in battle, and the latter perished by the sword, indeed, of the Ammonites, but by the contrivance of his sovereign. This fact was no sooner communicated to him, than David, with perfect composure, took Bath-sheba to wife, and after a short campaign in person against Rabbah, which he took by storm, inflicting a terrible punishment upon its rulers, he returned to Jerusalem in apparent forgetfulness that the laws of God were not to be violated with impunity.

Time passed, and the partner of his guilt presented him with a son, the fruit of their illicit intercourse. Hitherto no judgment had befallen him; nor had he been taught, by any palpable sign, that Jehovah was offended; but now the announcement was made after a fashion which came home to the bosom of the conscience-struck monarch. The prophet Nathan ap-

peared before him, and in a parable of singular beauty, in which a rich man is represented as seizing upon the solitary ewe-lamb of his poor neighbour, compelled him to pronounce a heavy sentence of condemnation against himself. This was precisely what the prophet desired to effect. He showed David that he was the unfeeling individual who esteemed the sufferings of a neighbour as nothing, provided they opened the way to his own gratifications; and he informed him, that though God, in consideration of his penitence, would spare his own life, a heavy penalty would nevertheless be exacted from him; nor did any great while elapse ere his punishment began.

The child to which Bath-sheba had given birth died, in spite of the urgent prayers and profound humiliation of its father. This was but the commencement of sorrows, which the birth of Solomon can hardly be said to have materially alleviated; and the monarch's sufferings became, for a time, more oppressive, in proportion as their tide rolled on. Among a numerous offspring of sons, David had only one daughter, who was born to him by Maacha, the daughter of Talmai, King of Geshur, and was called Tamar. Like her brother Absalom, Tamar was a person of surpassing beauty, and her beauty excited a violent and unnatural passion in the bosom of Amnon, David's eldest son by another wife. It was not, however, in the young man's power immediately to gratify his wishes, because the daughters of a royal house were then, as they are now, kept secluded in eastern countries even from the society of their brothers; but at last, through the contrivance of a friend named Jonadab, he forcibly accomplished his design. This was scarcely done, however, ere his love degenerated into hatred, and he thrust the miserable girl, with insult and loathing, from his presence.

It was but natural that Tamar should communicate

her misfortune both to her father and her brother Absalom. She did so; and whilst the former expressed his indignation in strong terms, the latter, meditating a deeper revenge, said nothing. By this means he contrived to impress upon the minds of the public a persuasion that he intended to pass by the affront unnoticed, because the individual who had put it upon him and his sister was heir-apparent to the throne. But Absalom entertained very different intentions. Having permitted an interval of two years to elapse, he invited all his brothers, with Amnon among the rest, to a rustic fête at his country-seat at Hazer, where, armed men suddenly burst in upon the ravisher, and butchered him in his cups. As might be supposed, the event created no trifling sensation, both at Jerusalem and elsewhere. At first, a rumour prevailed that Absalom had slain the whole of his brothers, which threw David into an excess of sorrow; and though the return of the horrified company to the capital established the groundlessness of the rumour, enough had been done to wring the heart of a parent more than commonly attached to his children.

David felt once more that his sins had been great, as he contemplated the absolute destruction of his domestic peace; and he acknowledged in bitterness of spirit the justice of a punishment, of which the full amount had not yet been experienced.

Having thus satisfied his revenge, Absalom fled to the court of his maternal grandfather, where, during three years, he continued in exile; at the end of which time, Joab, perceiving that his father's anger had abated, contrived to have an order for his recall issued. Two years more, however, were permitted to elapse, before David would consent to see him; nor was it till after repeated intercessions on the part of his nobles, that the feelings of the parent were permitted to prevail over those of the monarch. But it would

have been well for David, had he given way to no such amiable weakness. Turbulent and ambitious, Absalom no sooner found himself restored to his original place in society, than he formed the infamous design of dethroning his father; and he matured his plans with a degree of subtlety, which could hardly fail of ensuring their success.

B. C.
1036. There appears to have been about this time an absence of due attention to the cares of government at David's court. Whether it was that Joab's influence was excessive, and that, like other men, who had wrought the state great services, he presumed upon his own merits, we are not told, but the course of justice seems to have been considerably impeded, through the interference of him and his adherents. Absalom was not slow to take advantage of the circumstance. By speaking soothingly to such suitors, as found their causes delayed, and throwing out hints that he would willingly assist them, if it were in his power, he gradually insinuated himself into the good opinion of the multitude, till matters were brought, by little and little, to the precise point, whither he was anxious to lead them. Then it was, that having obtained permission of his father to proceed as far as Hebron, under the pretext of performing a vow which he had sworn, when at Geshur, he gathered together a band of daring conspirators, and raising the standard of revolt, openly declared himself King of Israel. Nor was his party inconsiderable either in point of numbers, or the personal and political weight of such as supported it, seeing that, among others, Ahithophel, one of the most illustrious of David's counsellors, joined the conspiracy, and a large and well-appointed army followed him.

As soon as information was conveyed to David of his son's rebellion, he made haste to evacuate Jerusalem, either because the city was unprepared to with-

stand a siege, or that he was unwilling to bring upon it so grievous a calamity. He was followed by his guards, his best troops, and the chief of his friends, including Joab, who faithfully adhered to his fortunes; but Zadok and Abiathar, the priests, he commanded to return with the ark to its place, whilst his trusty counsellor, Hushai, the Archite, he prevailed upon to feign an adherence to Absalom's cause, for the purpose of thwarting the designs of the crafty Ahithophel. Thus attended, David began his melancholy progress towards the Jordan. Great was the lamentation of the people at large, when they beheld their beloved monarch driven from his palace; and great was the sorrow of David and his company, as they proceeded; but there were not wanting persons, to whom such a spectacle afforded matter of triumph and rejoicing. Of that number was Shimei, a Benjamite, of the lineage of Saul, who cursed and threw stones at the king, as he passed; whilst Ziba, the servant of Mephibosheth, took advantage of the confusion, to wrong both his master and his sovereign. He loaded two asses with provisions, ran out to present them to David, and asserting that Mephibosheth had transferred his allegiance to the usurper, obtained a grant of his possessions from the indignant monarch.

Whilst David was thus conducting himself, Absalom and his increasing band advanced rapidly upon the capital, of which they took quiet possession, no garrison having been left to defend it. Here a council was called to deliberate upon the measures, which it behoved the conspirators next to pursue. It was resolved, at Ahithophel's suggestion, so thoroughly to involve themselves, that no hope of a reconciliation with the dethroned sovereign might remain. With this view, Absalom consented publicly to take as his own, ten of his father's concubines who had been left behind, after which the same wily adviser urged the

necessity of pursuing David and bringing him to battle, ere he should have time to gather strength. But this advice, which had it been followed, might have led to the full accomplishment of Absalom's purposes, was happily frustrated by the interposition of Hushai, to whom, after a slight hesitation, the usurper incautiously gave his confidence. Hushai reminded Absalom that his father's guards, though few in number, were all men of tried courage and matured discipline; he urged the hazard of driving such an army to despair, by compelling it to fight where retreat was unattainable, and thus working upon the fears of those to whom he spoke, he prevailed in causing Ahithophel's plan to be rejected. He lost no time, however, in sending off messengers to warn David of his danger, who instantly broke up his camp from Bahurim and retired beyond the Jordan; whilst Ahithophel, mortified at the rejection of his plan, and conscious that the affair was desperate, returned to his own house and hanged himself.

David, after passing the Jordan, established himself at Mahanaim, where, being considerably reinforced, as well as abundantly supplied with provisions, he determined to give the rebels battle. The latter, led on by Absalom in person, under whom one Amasa, his maternal cousin, commanded, soon made their appearance, and both armies drew up, partly upon an open plain, and partly in the wood of Ephraim. On this occasion, David himself did not take the field, his followers having prevailed upon him to abide with the garrison in the city, but the leaders were Joab, the commander in chief, Abishai, Joab's brother, and Ittai, the Gittite, all distinguished warriors, and companions of David's early fortunes. To these the king gave pressing instructions, on no account whatever to permit Absalom to be slain, for whom, in spite of all his crimes the fond father appears to have nourished, to the last, an extravagant partiality.

A furious battle was fought, which ended in the defeat of the rebel army, with the loss of twenty thousand men. The slaughter, indeed, was the greater, that, owing to the intricacy of the thickets, it was difficult for fugitives to effect their escape, and the same circumstance, which caused the death of so many persons of less note, proved also fatal to Absalom. That prince, when galloping at speed under an oak, was caught by the head between its boughs, and being lifted from his mule, hung suspended in air, till Joab became acquainted with his situation. The general, more mindful of his master's true interests, than studious to obey an imprudent order, hastened to end the war, by killing him who had occasioned it; after which, he caused his troops to be recalled from the pursuit, and the broken army escaped. With respect to Absalom, his body was cast into a cave, where, according to custom, a cairn, or huge pile of stones, was raised over it, whilst messengers ran to inform David of the success, which had attended his arms. But to him, not even the announcement of a victory, nor the sure prospect of a restoration to the throne, sufficed to compensate for the loss of his son. He lamented the fall of Absalom so undisguisedly, as to excite the indignation, not less than the pity of his followers; nor was it till he became assured of the fatal consequences that were likely to follow, that he would consent so much as to conceal his sorrow. Prudence, however, at last prevailed over natural feeling, and in the hurry and pomp of returning greatness, the anguish of the moment was drowned.

Such is a connected history of the first portion of David's reign, as it stands on record in the second Book of Samuel. That there occur in it more than one event, not unlikely to perplex the inattentive reader, cannot be denied; yet here, as elsewhere, the difficulties which present themselves require nothing

more than a moderate degree of reflection, in order to fall to pieces of their own weight. It has been asserted, for instance, of the portion of Scripture before us, that it tells a tale of little else besides cruelties and crimes, many of them perpetrated by David himself; and it has been triumphantly demanded how a man, stained with so many vices, can, without impiety, be styled a "man after God's own heart." We will endeavour to meet the objection, because under it is comprehended all that the infidel is justified in urging against the credibility of the narrative.

The peculiar term, of which a use so unworthy is made, was applied, it will be recollected, to David, whilst that personage yet lived the life of a private man, and kept his father's sheep. It was employed, moreover, by God himself, as distinguishing the future from the present king of Israel, not in their individual characters, as members of the great family of mankind, but as the chief rulers of God's chosen people. To understand its real import, therefore, all that seems necessary is, to ascertain the particular duties of the kings of Israel; and no man who is aware that these monarchs filled, in the strictest sense of the phrase, the station of Jehovah's vicegerents, can, for a moment, be at a loss in effecting that discovery. The kings of Israel were placed upon the throne, for the purpose of administering the divine law, as that had been given through Moses. In an especial degree, it was their duty to preserve the people pure from the guilt of idolatry; idolatry being, among the Hebrews, a crime equivalent to high-treason among us; whilst, on all occasions, whether of foreign war or domestic arrangements, they were bound to act in strict obedience to the will of God, as that might be from time to time revealed to them. Whether this should be done by Urim, by the voice of a prophet, or some palpable and immediate vision, the King of Israel was equally bound

to obey; and as long as he did obey, literally, fully, and cheerfully, he was, in his public capacity, a man after God's own heart.

An ordinarily attentive perusal of the preceding pages will show, that David, as compared with Saul (and it is only with reference to such comparison, that the phrase under review ought to be regarded), was strictly worthy of the honourable title bestowed upon him. Whatever his private vices might be, in all public matters his obedience to God's laws was complete; indeed, he never speaks of himself in any other language, than as the servant or minister of Jehovah. No individual among all that reigned in Jerusalem, ever exhibited greater zeal against idolatry; of the Mosaic code he was, in his official capacity, uniformly observant; and to every command of God, by whomsoever conveyed, he paid strict attention. Such was by no means the case with Saul, as his assumption of the priestly office, and his conduct towards the Amalekites, demonstrate; and it was simply to distinguish him from his predecessor, as one on whose steady devotion to the Divine wishes reliance could be placed, that God spoke of him to Samuel, in the terms so frequently misinterpreted.

If it be further urged that David's moral conduct was far from being perfect; that his treatment of Joab, after the murder of Abner, was weak; his behaviour to the captive Ammonites, barbarous; his conduct in the case of Uriah, the Hittite, infamous; and his general treatment of his children, without excuse; we have no wish, as we profess not to have the power, absolutely to deny the assertions. His receiving Joab into favour, whilst his hands were red with the blood of Abner, may be pronounced an act of weakness; yet it was such an act as any other person, in his circumstances, would have been apt to perform. Joab was a distinguished soldier, highly esteemed by the troops,

and possessed of great influence in the nation; it would have been the height of imprudence, had David, situated as he was, made such a man his enemy; but that he wholly disapproved of the treacherous deed which Joab had done, he took every conceivable means to demonstrate. He conferred a species of public funeral upon the murdered man, and attended it in person, as chief mourner.

The treatment of the captive Ammonites was doubtless exceedingly cruel; yet its cruelty may admit of some extenuation, provided we take one or two matters, as they deserve to be taken, into consideration. In the first place, the age was a barbarous one, and from the influence of the times in which he lived, it would be folly to expect that David could be free. In the next place, the tortures inflicted upon the Ammonites are not to be understood as heaped indiscriminately upon the whole body of the people. The magistrates and principal men were alone "put under saws and harrows of iron, and made to pass through the brick-kiln," and these suffered a fate so horrible, only in retaliation for similar excesses committed by their order upon certain Hebrew prisoners. Besides, the gross and unprovoked indignities heaped upon David's ambassadors, might well inflame his fury to the highest pitch; since then, even more conspicuously than now, the persons of envoys were considered sacred, especially in the east. Without, therefore, attempting to excuse such actions, as no enlightened person would now, under any provocation, perpetrate, we must nevertheless repeat, that David's treatment of the Ammonites was not absolutely devoid of extenuating circumstances; an assertion which cannot, we feel, be hazarded in reference to that monarch's behaviour towards Uriah, the Hittite.

Perhaps there is not recorded in any volume a series of crimes more gross or inexcusable than those of which we are now bound to take notice. Adultery

and murder are terms too mild for them, inasmuch as the particular acts of adultery and murder implied other offences scarcely less heinous than themselves. The woman abused by David was the wife of a proselyte from a heathen nation, whom it was to the interest and honour of the true religion for the chosen head of God's nation to treat with marked delicacy. He was, moreover, a brave and faithful soldier; so brave and zealous in his master's service, that even when summoned by the king himself to the capital, he refused to indulge in its luxuries, whilst his comrades were exposed to the hardships of war. This man David would have vitally wronged, by introducing into his family a child, of which the king himself was the father, and failing in the accomplishment of a design so iniquitous, he coolly devised his death. Again, that the deed might be done without bringing disgrace upon himself, he ordered his general to place this gallant soldier in a post of danger, and deserting him there, to leave him to his fate; and when all had befallen as he wished, his observation was, that "the sword devoured one as well as another." These several occurrences, summed up as they were by the abrupt and shameless marriage of Bath-sheba, combine to complete a concatenation of crimes, of which it is impossible to speak or think without horror; yet is there nothing connected with them, in the slightest degree, mischievous to the credibility or consistency of Scripture.

It cannot, with any truth, be asserted that God either was, or is represented to have been a party to these black deeds. So far is this from being the case, that we find a prophet sent expressly to the sinful monarch, to point out to him the enormity of his offences, and to assure him of a punishment, grievous in proportion to the degree of defilement which he had contracted. But as David's crimes had been committed in his private capacity, so his punishment

was made to affect his private fortunes. His own children became the instruments of God's anger; and heavier domestic calamities than fell upon him no man, perhaps, has ever endured. His only daughter, and as such, doubtless, his favourite child, is ravished by her brother Amnon; the ravisher is murdered by his brother Absalom; Absalom revolts against his father, drives him from his capital, and is finally slain in battle fighting against him. If there be not in this enough to vindicate the honour of God, we know not where marks of Divine displeasure are to be looked for; and as to the credibility of the scriptural narrative, that appears to be strengthened, rather than weakened, by the detail of David's fall. No fictitious writer would have represented one whom he had already designated as "a man after God's own heart," and whom he evidently desires his readers to regard with peculiar reverence, as a murderer and adulterer. It is the province of a narrator of facts alone to speak of men as they were, by exposing the vices and follies even of his principal heroes; nor is the history without its effect, as a great moral warning. It teaches the important lesson, that the commission of one crime seldom, if ever, fails to lead to the commission of others; whilst it furnishes a memorable example of the clemency which forbids any sinner to despair, or regard himself as beyond the pale of mercy.

Of David's conduct towards his children, it seems to us little better than a waste of time to set up either an explanation or a defence. Extravagantly partial to them he doubtless was; so partial as to pass over, in their behaviour, crimes which we can hardly believe would have been passed by had others, besides the members of his own family, committed them. It is, indeed, true that the law of Moses, by which alone David professed to be guided, is not very explicit as to the punishment which ought to have been awarded to Amnon; but the truth we suspect to be, as Josephus

has given it, that David abstained from bringing him to a public trial, after his outrage to Tamar, because the feelings of the father prevailed over those of the magistrate. In like manner, his pardoning Absalom's crime, in defiance of the law, which expressly enjoins blood to be shed for blood, without redemption, is open to a similar charge: yet even here, there is more to be urged in the king's defence, than the mere operation of natural affection. Absalom took shelter at a foreign court immediately on the perpetration of the murder; it might not be in David's power to force his surrender, and hence the only alternative was to leave him in exile, among heathens, at the manifest hazard of the corruption of his religious principles, or to permit his return to Jerusalem, and ultimately to receive him into favour. With respect, again, to his subsequent indulgence of that prince—an indulgence to which, in some degree, his insurrection deserves to be traced back—we see in it only one more proof of that amiable weakness which characterized all the monarch's dealings towards his family, his fondness for every member of which unquestionably led him into errors, if not of the heart, at all events of the head. Such errors, however, leave but trivial blots upon the general reputation of any man. They proceed from a good principle even when carried to weakness, and will be sought for in vain among the utterly heartless, profligate, or selfish; and as David is not represented in Scripture, as either a perfect saint or a perfect hero, we see no reason why his strength of mind, more than his moral character, should be vindicated from all the charges which may be brought against it.

END OF VOL. I.

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